



RAH E ILM

تعليم المجاهد

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE



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(Passed away in 610 AH)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ط

Du'ā for Reading the Book

Read the following Du'ā (supplication) before you study a religious book or an Islamic lesson, you will remember whatever you study,
:إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ

اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ عَلَيْنَا حِكْمَتَكَ وَانْشُرْ
عَلَيْنَا رَحْمَتَكَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

Translation

Yā Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ! Open the portal of knowledge and wisdom for us, and have mercy on us! O the One Who is the most Honourable and Glorious!

(Al-Mustatraf, vol. 1, pp. 40)

Note: Recite Ṣalāt-‘Alan-Nabī ﷺ once before and after the Du'ā.



الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَ بَنِي آدَمَ بِالْعِلْمِ وَالْعَمَلِ عَلَى جَمِيعِ الْعَالَمِ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ
عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ سَيِّدِ الْعَرَبِ وَالْعَجَمِ وَ عَلَى آلِهِ وَ أَصْحَابِهِ يَنَابِيعُ الْعُلُومِ وَالْحِكْمِ

All praises be to Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ Who granted virtue to the children of Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام over the whole universe through knowledge and action. Blessings and salutations upon Sayyidunā Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ and upon his family and companions عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّضْوَان who are the fountains of knowledge and wisdom.

I have seen many students in my time who attempt to gain knowledge but do not reach their goals and thus become deprived of the fruits and benefits of knowledge. The cause for this is that they commit mistakes in the ways that they gain knowledge. They do not fulfil the conditions of gaining knowledge. The one who embarks upon the wrong path will eventually find that he is now astray and regardless of whether his goals were numerous or few, he will never be able to reach them.

After doing Istikhārah, I decided and deemed it relevant that I should elaborate upon the ways of seeking knowledge for students in light of what has come across my sight in various books and what I have heard from my capable teachers. It is my hope that the sincere students who are inclined towards learning knowledge will pray for my salvation and success on the Judgement Day.

I named this book “تَعْلِيمُ الْمُتَعَلِّمِ طَرِيقَ التَّعَلُّمِ” meaning “Teaching the Student the Method of Seeking Knowledge’. In this regard, I have divided this book into various chapters which are briefly explained here:

1. فَصْلٌ فِي مَاهِيَةِ الْعِلْمِ وَالْفِقْهِ وَفَضْلِهِ

The reality of knowledge and jurisprudence, and its virtues

2. فَصْلٌ فِي النِّيَّةِ فِي حَالِ التَّعَلُّمِ

Intention when seeking knowledge

3. فَصْلٌ فِي اخْتِيَارِ الْعِلْمِ وَالْأُسْتَاذِ وَالشَّرِيكِ وَالشَّبَاتِ

Selecting a science, a teacher, and class fellows and adopting steadfastness

4. فَصْلٌ فِي تَعْظِيمِ الْعِلْمِ وَأَهْلِهِ

Respect for knowledge and knowledgeable people

5. فَصْلٌ فِي الْحِدِّ وَالْمُواظَبَةِ وَالْهَمَّةِ

Hard work, persistence and enthusiasm

6. فَصْلٌ فِي بَدَايَةِ السَّبْقِ وَقَدْرِهِ وَتَرْتِيبِهِ

Ways of commencing a lesson, its sequence, and amount

7. فَصْلٌ فِي التَّوَكُّلِ

Importance of trust

8. فَصْلٌ فِي وَقْتِ التَّحْصِيلِ

Suitable time to gain knowledge

9.

فَصْلٌ فِي الشَّفَقَةِ وَالتَّصِيحَةِ

Importance and excellence of kindness and advice

10.

فَصْلٌ فِي الْإِسْتِفَادَةِ

How to obtain benefit

11.

فَصْلٌ فِي الْوَرَعِ فِي حَالَةِ التَّعَلُّمِ

Piety when acquiring knowledge

12.

فَصْلٌ فِيْمَا يُورَثُ الْحِفْظَ وَفِيْمَا يُورَثُ النِّسْيَانَ

That which improves memory and that which causes forgetfulness

13.

فَصْلٌ فِي مَا يَجْلِبُ الرِّزْقَ وَفِيْمَا يَمْنَعُهُ وَمَا يَزِيدُ فِي الْعُمْرِ وَمَا يَنْقُصُ

That which brings livelihood and that which reduces it; that which increases it and that which decreases it

وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

From Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ is my ability, upon Him is my trust and
towards Him I turn.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
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CHAPTER ONE

The reality of knowledge and jurisprudence, and its virtues

The Beloved Prophet ﷺ said:

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ وَ مُسْلِمَةٍ

Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim male and female.

(Sunan Ibn-e-Mājah, vol. 1, pp.146, Ḥadīṣ 224;

Al-Maqāṣid-ul-Ḥasanāt, pp. 282, Taḥat-ul-Ḥadīṣ 66)

O beloved student! You should be aware that it is not necessary upon every Muslim to learn all the sciences but it is obligatory upon a Muslim to gain religious information about those matters which he meets throughout his life. This is why it is said:

أَفْضَلُ الْعِلْمِ عِلْمُ الْحَالِ وَأَفْضَلُ الْعَمَلِ حِفْظُ الْحَالِ

*The most virtuous knowledge is knowledge of one's present condition
and the most virtuous deed is the protection of one's condition.*

So it is very important for a Muslim to learn those sciences which he needs in his daily life regardless of which occupation he has a link with. The first Farḍ upon a Muslim is Ṣalāḥ, therefore, it is obligatory upon every Muslim to learn at least that amount of knowledge in regard to Ṣalāḥ so that the Farḍ (of Ṣalāḥ) is fulfilled. In the same way, it is

Wājib upon every Muslim to learn that much information in regard to Ṣalāh which would allow that Muslim to fulfil that which is Wājib upon him. The procedure is that it is obligatory to learn the knowledge which becomes a cause for the fulfilment of a Farḍ action and it is Wājib to learn the knowledge which becomes a means for the fulfilment of a Wājib. The same procedure can be applied to the rulings in regard to Ṣaum (fast) and if a person is blessed with wealth, then the same procedure can be applied to Zakāh. In the same way, for those, who are merchants, the same rule will apply to the rulings in regard to trading i.e. it will be essential for them to learn those issues which will allow them to act upon the Farāid and it will be obligatory for them to learn those issues which will allow them to act upon the Wājibāt.

It was once said to Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَمَام, “Your Eminence, please write a book on Zuḥd (asceticism).” He رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ replied, “I have written a book about the rulings relating to trading.”

The meaning behind this was that the Zāhid is he who saves himself from disliked actions and those actions in regard to which some doubt exists when doing trading. In the same way in all matters and actions “Zuḥd” is preserving oneself from disliked actions and those actions which are doubted. When a person becomes involved in any type of trade or profession, then it is Farḍ upon him to gain knowledge to such an extent that it is possible for him to refrain from committing any Ḥarām action. The spiritual conditions have the same rulings as the physical issues such as trust, repentance, and fear and pleasure of Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ, etc. This is because the aforementioned conditions of the heart are such that a person faces them at all times. So as a result, possessing knowledge in regard to the situations of the heart is also Farḍ.

The excellence of knowledge and its virtue is not hidden from anyone, as knowledge is a characteristic which is integrated with the

human being. Other characteristics such as determination, bravery, generosity, power and kindness, etc. are found in both human beings and animals. Knowledge is that characteristic, through which Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ granted virtue to Sayyidunā Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and ordered the angels to prostrate with reverence (Sajdah Ta'zīmī) before Sayyidunā Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام.

Knowledge has attained virtue and excellence because it is a means of reaching piety (Taqwā) and it is due to Taqwā that a person becomes worthy of everlasting fortune in the court of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. This reality was described by someone in Arabic poetic verses whilst addressing Imām Muhammad Bin Ḥasan رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ،

تَعَلَّمْ فَإِنَّ الْعِلْمَ زِينٌ لِأَهْلِهِ وَفَضْلٌ وَعُنْوَانٌ لِكُلِّ الْبَحَامِدِ

Seek knowledge, for indeed knowledge is beauty for those who possess it as well as virtue and a proof for all praiseworthy characteristics.

وَكَُنْ مُسْتَفِيدًا كُلَّ يَوْمٍ زِيَادَةً مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَأَسْبَحْ فِي بُحُورِ الْفَوَائِدِ

And be someone who benefits every day more and more and swim in the oceans of benefits.

تَفَقَّهُ فَإِنَّ الْفِقْهَ أَفْضَلُ قَائِدٍ إِلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَأَعَدَلُ قَاصِدٍ

Learn Fiqh (jurisprudence), for indeed Fiqh is the best of guides towards goodness and piety, and the greatest judge.

هُوَ الْعِلْمُ الْهَادِي إِلَى سُنَنِ الْهُدَى هُوَ الْحِصْنُ يُنَجِّي مِنْ جَمِيعِ الشَّدَائِدِ

It is knowledge which is the guide to the paths of guidance. It is the fort that frees (one) from all calamities.

فَإِنَّ فَقِيهًا وَاحِدًا مُتَوَرِّعًا أَشَدُّ عَلَى الشَّيْطَانِ مِنْ أَلْفِ عَابِدٍ

For indeed one pious Faqīh (expert of jurisprudence) is more severe upon Satan than one thousand worshippers.

Just as knowledge is a way of reaching piety (Taqwā), in the same way, other characteristics for example generosity, stinginess, cowardice, bravery, pride, humility, modesty, miserliness and wastefulness can only be recognised and differentiated between, through knowledge. Amongst the aforementioned characteristics, pride, stinginess, cowardice and wastefulness are Ḥarām and Mamnū'. Only through the awareness of the positive and negative aspects of these characteristics, one can save himself from them. Thus it is Farḍ upon every human being to learn knowledge in regard to these characteristics.

Imām Ajal Sayyidunā Shahīd Nāṣiruddīn Abū Qāsim رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ wrote an excellent book¹ on ethics (Akhlāq). The revision of this book and memorising its articles is very important.

As for those matters which are faced by a human being only at certain times, seeking knowledge in regard to these matters is Farḍ Kifāyah i.e. even if some people in a city learn knowledge in regard to these matters; the Farḍ will be fulfilled from the rest of the people. If no one in the city gains knowledge in regard to these matters, then the people of the whole city will be sinful. It is obligatory upon the ruler of the time that he command the people in the city to seek knowledge in regard to these matters and compel them to learn.

In order to explain the need for knowledge and its importance, an example is that the knowledge which is always faced by a person is like nutrition. Just as nutrition is essential for a human being, seeking

¹ The author's abovementioned book, "*Kitāb-ul-Akhlāq*" is not available nowadays. But if someone wishes to develop an awareness pertaining to hospitality, pride, self-denial and other matters related to the heart, he should obtain benefit from the cassettes of reformatory discourses, books and booklets, etc. which have meaningful context of the ethical standards of conduct. Furthermore, in regard to these matters a detailed context is also available in the books, '*Iḥyā-ul-'Ulūm*' and '*Kīmīyā-e-Sa'ādat*' both written by Hujjat-ul-Islām Sayyidunā Imām Muhammad Ghazālī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى الْوَالِي.

this type of knowledge is also essential. As for knowledge a human being sometimes comes across, that type of knowledge is like medicine. Medicine is only required when a person is ill. This is why it is necessary that there should be some people who have awareness of medicine. The same way, the knowledge which we sometimes come across, it is also necessary that people should have awareness of this. The example of ‘Ilm-e-Nujūm (astrology) is like a disease; therefore, it is Ḥarām to seek this knowledge. This is because seeking this knowledge cannot benefit nor can it cause harm because it is impossible to flee from Qaḍā (judgement) and Qadr (destiny).

It is important for every Muslim to always be in the remembrance of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ and in a state of supplication to Him as well as spending time reciting the Holy Quran and giving charity in the way of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ which is something that gets rid of calamities. A person should ask Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ for forgiveness and be someone who desires preservation of peace in this life and the next. This is so that Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ will save him from calamities and afflictions as it is absolutely clear:

مَنْ رُزِقَ الدُّعَاءَ لَمْ يُحْرَمِ إِلَّا جَابَةٌ

The one who is granted (the ability of) supplication (Du'ā), he will not be deprived of acceptance.

If, however, it is written in destiny that a person will be afflicted with a calamity, then that person will certainly be afflicted. Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ will bring ease in that affliction as a result of the Du'ā and will grant patience.

If a person wishes to learn that much ‘Ilm-e-Nujūm, through which he will be granted the ability to access the direction of the Ka’bah and be able to recognise the times of Ṣalāh, then learning that much of ‘Ilm-e-Nujūm will be permissible. Learning medicine is also permissible

because this is also one of the necessary sources (of gaining good health). Just like other sources, the seeking of this source is also permissible. Treatment of illnesses is proven from the Noble Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ himself. It has been narrated from Imām Shafi’i عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ الْكَافِي that he said, “Only two sciences are worthy of being studied ‘Ilm-ul-Fiqh (jurisprudence) to understand religious affairs and secondly, ‘Ilm-ut-Tib (medicine) in order to diagnose the human body. Aside from this, all other types of knowledge are fruits of congregations.

Knowledge

أَمَّا تَفْسِيرُ الْعِلْمِ: فَهُوَ صِفَةٌ يَتَجَلَّى بِهَا لِمَنْ قَامَتْ هِيَ بِهِ الْمَذْكُورُ كَمَا هُوَ

Knowledge is that characteristic, through which the remembered thing (the thing that is desired to be known) becomes apparent to the person who possesses (this characteristic) in its real form.

Jurisprudence

الْفِقْهُ: مَعْرِفَةُ دَقَائِقِ الْعِلْمِ مَعَ نَوْعِ عِلَاجٍ

Jurisprudence is the cognition of the intricacies of knowledge with various practices.

Sayyidunā Imām A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ الْكَرِيمِ has defined Fiqh in the following manner:

الْفِقْهُ: مَعْرِفَةُ النَّفْسِ مَا لَهَا وَ مَا عَلَيْهَا

Fiqh is the awareness of the soul as to what is beneficial for it and what is harmful for it.

He has further stated that the purpose behind getting knowledge is to act upon it, and acting upon it is the forsaking of the world for the sake of the hereafter. A human being should not be unaware of himself and he should not be heedless in regard to those things which can cause harm and benefit in the world and in the hereafter. He should adopt those things which bring benefit to him in this world and in the hereafter whilst refraining from those things which can cause harm to him in this life and in the next. It should not be the case that his knowledge become evidence against him on the Judgement Day and through this knowledge, he will be tormented more.

نَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ سُخْطِهِ وَعِقَابِهِ

We seek Allah's refuge from His displeasure and punishment.

There are many verses and authentic Aḥādīṣ in regard to the virtues of knowledge. Due to the fear of prolonging the discussion, we have not mentioned them.

Intention when seeking knowledge

During the period when the student is seeking knowledge, there should be a purpose behind seeking knowledge. This is because intention is the basis of all situations as the Blessed Prophet ﷺ has said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

Deeds are based on intentions.

(Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, vol. 1, pp. 5, Ḥadīṣ 1)

In another Ḥadīṣ, the Noble Prophet ﷺ has stated:

كَمْ مِنْ عَمَلٍ يَتَصَوَّرُ بِصُورَةِ أَعْمَالِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَصِيرُ بِحُسْنِ النِّيَّةِ مِنْ
أَعْمَالِ الْآخِرَةِ وَكَمْ مِنْ عَمَلٍ يَتَصَوَّرُ بِصُورَةِ أَعْمَالِ الْآخِرَةِ ثُمَّ يَصِيرُ
مِنْ أَعْمَالِ الدُّنْيَا بِسُوءِ النِّيَّةِ

There are many deeds which are perceived to be from the deeds of the world but they become from the deeds of the Ākhiraḥ through a good intention. And there are many deeds which are perceived to be from the deeds of the Ākhiraḥ but they become from the deeds of the world as a result of a bad intention.

It is thus extremely important for a student that he should have intentions of pleasing Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, achieving success in the Judgement Day, ridding yourself and others of ignorance, reviving the Dīn, and saving Islam through knowledge, as the survival of Islam is possible

through knowledge only. Asceticism and piety cannot be attained in the state of ignorance.

My revered teacher, the author of “*Al-Ĥidāyah*”, Shaykh Burhānuddīn رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ recited the following verses of a poet before us:

فَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ عَالِمٌ مُتَهَتِّكٌ وَأكْبَرُ مِنْهُ جَاهِلٌ مُتَنَسِّكٌ

A non-practising scholar is a very big trouble, but an ignorant worshipper is way worse than him.

هُمَا فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْعَالَمَيْنِ عَظِيمَةٌ لِمَنْ بِهِمَا فِي دِينِهِ يَتَمَسَّكُ

They both are a great strife one the earth for he who follows them in the Dīn.

A student should always thank Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ for comprehension and intelligence as well as for good health, and he should never intend to turn people towards himself nor should he intend to earn the worldly wealth. He should not intend to gain respect and dignity in the sight of those who possess status. Imām Muhammad رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ has said:

لَوْ كَانَ النَّاسُ كُلُّهُمْ عِبِيدِي لَأَعْتَقْتُهُمْ وَتَبَرَّأْتُ عَنْ وَلَائِهِمْ

If all the people of the world become my slaves, I will free them and forsake their leadership.

The reason for this is that the person who is blessed with the pleasure of knowledge and good action, then he will not turn towards the respect and reverence of the people.

Shaykh Imām Qawāmuddīn Ḥammād Bin Ibrāhīm Bin Ismā'il Ṣaffār Anṣārī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ الْقَوِيُّ recited a stanza before us which is narrated from Imām-e-A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ الْأَكْرَمُ:

مَنْ طَلَبَ الْعِلْمَ لِلْمَعَادِ فَازَ بِفَضْلِ مِّنَ الرَّشَادِ

Whoever learnt knowledge for the Judgement Day, he succeeded with blessings of guidance.

فِيَا لِحُسْرَانِ طَالِبِيهِ لَنَيْلِ فَضْلِ مِّنَ الْعِبَادِ

There is loss for the one who seeks it (knowledge) in order to gain benefits from the people.

It is accepted that one should not acquire knowledge due to social fame and status. However, if he is determined to achieve social fame and status in order that he can call people towards good and prevent them from evil easily, establish the truth, promulgate the Dīn and, moreover, if there is no wish to achieve high status, then it is permissible to achieve social fame and status so much that he can call people towards good and prevent them from evil.

It is important for a student that he ponder over his intention and he should not be heedless in this regard. This is because knowledge is only acquired by a student through a great amount of effort and hardship; therefore, this knowledge should not be wasted in order to gain this mortal and belittled world.

هِيَ الدُّنْيَا أَقْلُ مِنَ الْقَلِيلِ وَعَاشِقُهَا أَذْلُ مِنَ الذَّلِيلِ

This is the world which is very little (in comparison to the Ākhirah); its lover is extremely disgraced.

تُصَمُّ بِسِحْرِهَا قَوْمًا وَتُعَى فُهُمُ مُتَحَيِّرُونَ بِلَا دَلِيلِ

It deafens a nation through its magic, while it blinds others. They are thus amazed without any purpose.

A student should not disgrace himself by desiring those things which have no benefit. He should always avoid those actions which can bring a disgrace to knowledge and on the knowledgeable people. Furthermore, a student should be humble, and humility lies between arrogance and self-deprecation. The details of these things can be studied in “*Kitāb-ul-Akhlāq*”.

In regard to humility, Shaykh Imām Rukn-ul-Islām also known as Adīb Mukhtār عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَقَّارِ recited the following stanza before me:

إِنَّ التَّوَاضُّعَ مِنْ خِصَالِ الْمُتَّقِي وَبِهِ التَّقِيُّ إِلَى الْمَعَالِي يَرْتَقِي

Tawāḍu is from the characteristics of the pious people and through it they are elevated.

وَمِنَ الْعَجَائِبِ عَجَبٌ مَنْ هُوَ جَاهِلٌ فِي حَالِهِ أَهْوُ السَّعِيدُ أَمْ الشَّقِي

The strangest is he who does not recognise in his state (of arrogance) whether he is fortunate or unfortunate.

أَمْ كَيْفَ يُخْتَمُ عُمرُهُ أَوْ رُوحُهُ يَوْمَ النَّوَى مُتَسِفِّلٌ أَوْ مُرْتَقِي

(He is also unaware) of how his life and soul will end on the day of demise whether he will be amongst the degraded or the elevated.

وَالْكِبْرِيَاءُ لِلرَّبِّ بِنَاصِفَةٌ بِهِ مَخْصُوصَةٌ فَتَجَنَّبْنَاهَا وَاتَّقِي

Pride belongs to our Rab and it is attributed to Him specifically therefore refrain from it and fear.

Sayyidunā Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَمِ said:

عَظِّمُوا عِمَائِمَكُمْ وَوَسَّعُوا أَكْمَامَكُمْ

Enlarge your turbans and widen your sleeves.

The reason why the great Imām said this was that no one should consider sacred knowledge and knowledgeable people as inferior.

It is beneficial for a student to carefully read Sayyidunā Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah’s book, “*Kitāb-ul-Waṣīyat*” that he wrote for Yūnus Bin Khālīd Samtī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي when he was returning home.

يَجِدُهُ مَنْ يَطْلُبُهُ

The one who seeks it will find it.

When I was returning home, our respected teacher, Shaykh-ul-Islām Burhān-ul-Āimma ‘Alī Bin Abū Bakr عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى also advised me to write this will and therefore I wrote this will acting upon what he told me. Moreover, the reading of this book is extremely important for a teacher or Mufti, as it is in regard to dealing with the public.



Selecting a science, a teacher and class fellows, and adopting steadfastness

Selecting a science

A student should learn the best of all sciences and at that time it should be most required in Islamic matters. Then he should learn that which is next most important; therefore a student should give preference to ‘Ilm-ut-Tawhīd and Ma’rifāh of Allah ﷻ. One should recognize Allah ﷻ with evidence, as although the believer’s faith is honourable to us, yet it is necessary for him to recognize Allah ﷻ with evidences, or else he will be a sinner. A person should adopt old traditions and refrain from new ones as the scholars have stated:

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْعَتِيقِ وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْمُحَدَّثَاتِ

Hold onto the old traditions and refrain from new ones.

A student should not only concentrate on those issues in regard to which there is a difference of opinion and which arose after the demise of the great scholars, as this will lead the person to be far from Fiqh (jurisprudence). This will lead to him wasting his entire life along with creating hatred and enmity which is from the signs of the Judgement Day. Because of this type of dispute, knowledge and jurisprudence (‘Ilm and Fiqh) will be raised as has been narrated in the Ḥadīṣ.¹

¹ The Beloved and Blessed Prophet ﷺ has stated, ‘Acquire knowledge before it is lifted because none of you is aware (of the time) when he is in need of the thing that he possesses. So, for you it is obligatory to acquire knowledge. Refrain from obeying your wishes, and desist from embracing Bid’at (innovation); never fall into spying anyone, and hold firmly the age-old (Islamic) traditions.’ (Kanz-ul-‘Ummāl, vol. 10, pp. 72, Ḥadīṣ 28861)

Selecting a teacher

A student should choose the most pious and elderly person to be his teacher as Imām-e-A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَرِيمِ selected Ḥammād Bin Sulaymān عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَرِيمِ after a lot of contemplation. Sayyidunā Imām-e-A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَرِيمِ stated in regard to his teacher:

ثَبْتُ عِنْدَ حَمَّادِ بْنِ سُلَيْمَانَ فَنَبْتُ

I studied under Ḥammād Bin Sulaymān. Thus the level of my knowledge increased.

Sayyidunā Imām-e-A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَرِيمِ stated that he heard a physician of Samarqand saying, “A student who intended to go to Bukhārā so that he could acquire knowledge sought my advice in this regard.”

O beloved student! Just as that student sought advice, in the same manner, it is important for all students to seek advice on all matters. Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ ordained our Beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ to take advice on all matters. Even though no one is more intelligent than the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ, yet he was ordained to take advice. The Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ would take advice of the companions on all matters even on domestic matters.

Sayyidunā ‘Alī كَرَّمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَجْهَهُ الْكَرِيمُ said, “No person was destroyed as a result of seeking advice.”

It is said that there are three types of humans – complete, half and incomplete. The complete human is he who is opinionated and seeks advice from others. The half human is he who is opinionated but does not seek advice. And the incomplete human is he who is not opinionated nor does he seek advice.

Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ once said to Sayyidunā Sufyān Ṣaurī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ الْوَالِي that one should seek advice on matters from such people who fear Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

O beloved student! Seeking knowledge is more virtuous and greater than any other task; therefore, seeking advice in this regard is extremely important. The intelligent physician whilst advising the same student said, “When you go to Bukhara, do not hasten in going to and coming from Imāms, but you should rather spend approximately two months assessing the situation and then choose your teacher because if you begin to learn from a teacher without assessing the situation beforehand, then it is possible that after a while you no longer admire his manner of teaching and due to that, you leave him and go to another teacher which will lead to the deprivation of blessings in your knowledge. Therefore ensure that you contemplate for two months in regard to the selection of a teacher and seek advice from someone in this regard so that you do not have to turn away from the teacher who you choose. Thus there will be blessings in your knowledge and you will ensure that blessings reach others as well.”

Perseverance

O beloved student! You should be aware that perseverance is the root of all tasks but this is very difficult as a poet says:

لِكُلِّ إِلَى شَأْنٍ أَعْلَى حَرَكَاتٌ وَلَكِنْ عَزِيزٌ فِي الرِّجَالِ ثَبَاتٌ

Every human being makes movements to reach heights but perseverance is a great (difficult) thing for men.

Someone said that being patient for even one moment is very courageous; therefore, it is important for a student to learn from one

teacher with patience and persistence. He should also learn all his books with perseverance and should not leave any book incomplete. Whichever science he chooses, he should have perseverance in learning that science and he should not turn to any other science until he masters the science that he first chose. When a student lives in a particular city in order to gain knowledge, then he should not leave that city without a reason, as these things hinder the progress of acquiring knowledge. These types of actions will lead to a student becoming busy in unnecessary things and not only will they waste their time but they will also cause troubles to his teacher. A student should, therefore, be patient in regard to the desires of his inner self (Nafs) instead of acting upon them as a poet has stated:

إِنَّ الْهَوَىٰ لَهُوَ الْهَوَانُ بِعَيْنِهِ وَصَرِيحٌ كُلِّ هَوَىٰ صَرِيحٌ هَوَانٍ

Indeed the desires are intrinsically disgraceful and the one upon whom all desires became prevalent, disgrace became prevalent.

In the same way, a student should be patient upon the tribulations and calamities that he faces on his path of seeking knowledge. Someone said, "The treasures of favours and forgiveness are attainable after passing the bridges of tests." A poet said:

أَلَا لَا تَنَالُ الْعِلْمَ إِلَّا بِسِتَّةٍ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ عَنْ مَجْمُوعِهَا بِبَيَانٍ

Knowledge cannot be acquired but through six (things). I inform you about them all clearly...

ذِكَاؤٌ وَحِرْصٌ وَاصْطِبَارٌ وَبُلْغَةٌ وَارْشَادٌ أُسْتَاذٍ وَطُولُ زَمَانٍ

*(The following six things are important for a student)
...Intelligence, yearning, patience, sufficient wealth, guidance of teacher and a long period of time.*

Choosing class fellows

A student should choose such a person as his class fellow who is pious, works hard, and has a perfect character. A student should stay away from a lazy and useless person and especially he should refrain from the company of troublesome people who speak too much. A poet once said:

عَنِ الْمَرْءِ لَا تَسْأَلُ وَأَبْصِرْ قَرِيْنَهُ
فَكُلُّ قَرِيْنٍ بِالْمِقَارِ يَنْتَدِي

Do not ask about (the condition of) a man instead look at his companion for every person follows his companion.

فَإِنْ كَانَ ذَا شِرٍّ فَجَانِبْهُ سُرْعَةً
وَإِنْ كَانَ ذَا خَيْرٍ فَقَارِنْهُ تَهْتَدِي

'If (his companion) is bad then immediately turn away from him and if he is good then accompany him. You will find guidance.'

لَا تَصْحَبِ الْكَسْلَانَ فِي حَالَتِهِ
كَمْ صَالِحٍ بِفَسَادِ آخَرٍ يَفْسُدُ

'Do not accompany a lazy person. There are many pious people who have become misguided as a result of another person's misguidance.'

عَدَوَى الْبَلِيدِ إِلَى الْجَلِيدِ سَرِيعَةٌ
كَالْجَمْرِ يُوضَعُ فِي الرَّمَادِ فَيَخْبَدُ

'The bad habits of an unintelligent person have quick effects upon the one who is intelligent just as if one places a hot coal into ashes, the hot coal becomes cold.'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى فِطْرَةِ الْإِسْلَامِ
إِلَّا أَنْ أَبَوَيْهِ يَهُودَانِهِ أَوْ نَصْرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجَّسَانِهِ¹

¹ Şaḥīḥ Bukhārī, vol. 1, pp. 466, Ḥadīṣ 1385

‘Every child is born on the Fitrat (nature) of Islam but his parents make him a Jewish, a Christian or a fire worshipper.’

Someone wrote the following verses which are full of wisdom:

یاربد بدتر بود از ماربد حق ذات پاک الله الصمد

‘A bad friend is worse than a dangerous snake. The true is the Being of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ Who is Self-Sufficient.’

یاربد آرد ترا سوی جحیم یار نیکو گیرتایابی نعیم

‘A bad friend brings you towards the fire of Hell. Choose a pious friend so that you can achieve Paradise.’

Another poet said:

اِنْ كُنْتَ تَبْغِي الْعِلْمَ مِنْ اَهْلِهِ اَوْ شَاهِدًا يُخْبِرُ عَنْ غَائِبٍ

‘If you wish to find knowledge from those who are blessed with it or (if you wish to find) a witness who is informing of the unseen...’

فَاعْتَبِرِ الْأَرْضَ بِأَسْمَائِهَا وَاعْتَبِرِ الصَّاحِبَ بِالصَّاحِبِ

‘...then comprehend (the situation of) a land through the names (of its dwellers) and comprehend a person through his companions.’

Respect for knowledge and knowledgeable people

O beloved student! A student cannot acquire knowledge nor can he benefit from it until he respects knowledge, the knowledgeable people and his teacher. Someone said:

مَا وَصَلَ مَنْ وَصَلَ إِلَّا بِالْحُرْمَةِ وَمَا سَقَطَ مَنْ سَقَطَ إِلَّا بِتَرْكِ الْحُرْمَةِ

Whoever received anything received it through respect and nothing is lost but through the lack of respect.

It was said:

الْحُرْمَةُ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الطَّاعَةِ

“Respect is better than obedience.”

A person does not become an unbeliever through sins, but rather he becomes an unbeliever when he considers sins as inferior.

Respect for teacher

O beloved student! Respect for your teacher is in actuality respect for knowledge. Sayyidunā ‘Alī كَرَّمَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَجْهَهُ الْكَرِيمَ has stated:

أَنَا عَبْدٌ مَنْ عَلَّمَنِي حَرْفًا وَاحِدًا
إِنْ شَاءَ بَاعَ وَإِنْ شَاءَ أَعْتَقَ وَإِنْ شَاءَ اسْتَرْقَ

“I am the servant of the one who teaches me one word. If he wishes, he can sell me, free me or if he wishes he can keep me enslaved.”

On this, I, the author, have written the following stanza:

رَأَيْتُ أَحَقَّ الْحَقِّ حَقَّ الْمُعَلِّمِ وَأَوْجَبَهُ حِفْظًا عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

'I consider the rights of the teacher as the greatest of rights and I obligate its safeguarding upon every Muslim.'

لَقَدْ حَقَّ أَنْ يُهْدَى إِلَيْهِ كَرَامَةٌ لِتَعْلِيمِ حَرْفٍ وَاحِدٍ أَلْفَ دِرْهَمٍ

'It is befitting that he be given one thousand dirhams as a gift for teaching one word.'

O beloved student! Indeed the one who taught you even one word from the necessities of the Dīn is your religious father. Our teacher, Shaykh Sadīduddīn Shīrāzī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي used to narrate from his Shuyūkh (teachers) that the person who desires that his son should be an Islamic scholar, he should look after and respect the jurists who are financially weak. In order to ensure that their needs are met, he should continuously give something to them. If his son does not become an 'Ālim (scholar), his grandson will surely become an 'Ālim. The teacher's respect includes that a student should avoid walking in front of his teacher and sitting where his teacher sits. Without permission, the student should not begin talking to his teacher nor should he speak excessively in the presence of his teacher without permission. When the teacher is worried then at that time, the student should not ask any question but instead take the present situation into consideration. A student should not knock on the door of his teacher, but rather he should be patient until the teacher comes out.

A student should always keep in mind the pleasure of his teacher and refrain from the displeasure of his teacher. Apart from the disobedience of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, the student should obey his teacher in all other matters. Indeed one cannot obey a person for something which is an act of disobedience to Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ as the Noble Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

إِنَّ شَرَّ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُذْهِبُ دِينَهُ لِدُنْيَا غَيْرِهِ

“The worst of people is he who destroys his religion for the (improvement of the) world of someone else.”

Respecting the relatives and children of the teacher is the same as respecting the teacher. Our respected teacher, the author of ‘*Al-Hidāyah*’, Shaykh-ul-Islām, Sayyidunā Burhānuddīn عليه رحمه الله الوالي, narrated a parable of an erudite Imām amongst the Imāms of Bukhara that he was present in a gathering where something religious was being discussed while he suddenly stood and then sat. He did it a few times. When people asked the reason, the Imām replied that his beloved teacher’s son was playing outside with other children. Sometimes whilst playing, he would come in front of the Masjid. When the Imām would see the child, he explained that he would stand out of reverence for his teacher.

Imām Fakhruddīn Arsā Bandī عليه رحمه الله القوي was a leader of Imāms (*Ra’īs-ul-Āimma*) in the city of Marawi and he رحمته الله تعالى عليه was immensely respected by the king of his time. He used to say that he attained this status because of the service he rendered to his teacher as he cooked food for his teacher for the period of three years but due to reverence for his teacher, he never ate anything from that food.

Shaykh Shams-ul-Āimma Ḥalwānī قدس سره التوراني was stricken with an affliction, due to which he left Bukhārā and lived in a village. During his stay in the village, his students continuously came to visit him but one student, Shaykh Shams-ul-Āimma Zarnūjī عليه رحمه الله الوالي did not manage to visit. Shams-ul-Āimma Ḥalwānī قدس سره التوراني later asked Shams-ul-Āimma Zarnūjī عليه رحمه الله الوالي why he did not visit him and he received the reply that Shaykh Zarnūjī عليه رحمه الله الوالي had been busy serving his mother. Shaykh Ḥalwānī قدس سره التوراني said, ‘You will be

blessed with a long life but you will not have an enlightened class.’ This is what occurred as Shaykh Shams-ul-Āimma Zarnūjī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي spent most of his time in the villages and he did not manage to establish a system of learning and teaching anywhere. This is because the person who becomes the cause for his teacher’s discomfort will be deprived of the blessings of knowledge. Such a person cannot fully benefit from knowledge either as a poet has stated:

إِنَّ الْمُعَلِّمَ وَالطَّيِّبَ كَلَا هُمَا لَا يَنْصَحَانِ إِذَا هُمَا لَمْ يُكْرَمَا

‘A teacher and a doctor, they both do not give advice when they are not revered.’

فَاصْبِرْ لِدَائِكَ إِنْ جَفَوْتَ طَبِيبَهُ وَاقْنَعْ بِجَهْلِكَ إِنْ جَفَوْتَ مُعَلِّمًا

‘Be patient upon your illness if you wrong your doctor and be content with ignorance if you wrong your teacher.’

It is narrated that the Caliph Ḥārūn Rashīd sent his son to seek knowledge from Imām-ul-Lughāt Aṣma’ī. One day, Ḥārūn Rashīd saw that Aṣma’ī was performing Wuḍū and washing his feet whilst the son of Ḥārūn Rashīd was pouring water for him. Ḥārūn Rashīd complained to Aṣma’ī saying, ‘I sent my son so that you would teach him knowledge and respect so why didn’t you command the boy to pour water with one hand and wash the feet with the other?’

Respect for book

Respect for a book is in essence respect for knowledge. A student should never touch a book without purity.

It is narrated by Shaykh Shams-ul-Āimma Ḥalwānī قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ الثُّورَانِي who said that he received the treasures of knowledge through respect and reverence as he never even touched a piece of paper without being in the state of Wuḍū.

An incident occurred in the life of Shaykh Shams-ul-Āimma Imām Sarkhasī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْقَوِي when his stomach was upset. It was his habit that he would revise and debate over books during the night. The night when the Shaykh's stomach was upset, he performed Wuḍū seventeen times because he did not revise without Wuḍū.

The pious predecessors had so much love for Wuḍū because just as knowledge is Nūr (light), Wuḍū is also Nūr. Thus the light of knowledge further increases as a result of being in the state of Wuḍū.

It is extremely important for a student that he do not put his feet towards the books that he is learning. The books of Tafsīr (exegesis) should be put above all other books out of respect and nothing should be put on such books.

Our respected teacher, Shaykh Imām Burhānuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَمِين narrated from one of his Shuyūkh that a jurist had a habit of putting his inkpot on his book. The Shaykh said: برنیاپی i.e. you would not be able to benefit from knowledge.

Our respected teacher, Shaykh Imām Ajal Fakhr-ul-Islām Sayyidunā Qāḍī Khān عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَن used to say, 'Placing an inkpot on top of a book is permissible as long as the intention is not because of considering knowledge as inferior. It is better for one to avoid doing such a thing.

It is also extremely important for a student that he should have a beautiful handwriting and he should not write in small and illegible handwriting. He should not leave the area of footnotes, etc. empty unless there is a need.

Sayyidunā Imām-e-A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَم once noticed a person who was writing in extremely small handwriting. Imām-e-A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَم said to him, "You should not write in such a bad manner, as if you stayed alive, you would be ashamed due to this handwriting and if you were to die, you would be

recollected with harsh words. When you would be old and your eyes would become weak then you would be ashamed of this action.”

Shaykh Majduddīn Sarḥakī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ is narrated to have said, “Whenever we wrote carelessly in small and illegible handwriting, we gained nothing but shame. Whenever we selected a small part of a long discussion, we felt ashamed and whenever we did not compare a piece of writing with the actual manuscript, we were also ashamed.”

O beloved student! It is appropriate that a book should be square-shaped, as that was beloved to Sayyidunā Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَرِيمِ. Picking up such a book, placing it and revising it can be done with ease. A student should not use red ink, as this was not the way of the pious predecessors but was the way of the philosophers. A few of our Shuyūkh considered the use of red ink as being Makrūh (disliked).

Respect for class fellows

Respect for class fellows is also respect for knowledge. Remember, flattery is a condemned action but if there is a need to flatter someone in order to learn knowledge, then in this situation a student is advised to flatter his teacher or fellow student Islamic brothers so that he can benefit from them.

A student should listen to words of wisdom with respect and reverence even if he has heard one religious issue or one word a thousand times before.

It is a statement of a wise man, “The person who upon hearing a discussion full of knowledge a thousand times before, does not respect that discussion in the way that he respected the discussion when he first heard it, then such a person is not worthy of knowledge.”

If a student wishes to learn a new science, he should not choose that science from his own opinion, but he should rather place this situation before his teacher, as a teacher has a lot of experience in this regard. The teacher is fully aware of which science is relevant and which task the student is able to fulfil.

Our respected teacher, Shaykh Burhānuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَمِيمِينَ used to say, “The students of the early generations used to place their educational matters in the hands of their teachers and that is why they reached their goals and fulfilled their aims. Today, the students attempt to reach their goals without guidance from their teachers, thus these types of students do not reach their goals nor do they have any awareness in regard to knowledge and jurisprudence.

It is narrated that Imām Muhammad Bin Ism’āil Bukhārī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي would go to Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي and learn *Kitāb-uṣ-Ṣalāh* in Fiqh. When Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي saw that it was in the nature of Imām Bukhārī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي that he had little interest in Fiqh but he had an inclination towards the science of Ḥadīṣ, Imām Muhammad told Imām Bukhārī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي to go and learn ‘Ilm-ul-Ḥadīṣ. This was the great insight of Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي who saw the interest of Imām Bukhārī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي in ‘Ilm-ul-Ḥadīṣ. Thus when Imām Bukhārī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي followed the advice of his teacher and began to learn ‘Ilm-ul-Ḥadīṣ, the world saw his prominence in the science of Ḥadīṣ.

A student should not sit extremely close to his teacher without a reason during lessons. There should be a distance of a bow between a teacher and a student, as there is more respect with this type of seating arrangement.

A student should refrain from condemned characteristics because such characteristics are like dogs and the Blessed Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

لَا تَدْخُلُ الْمَلَكَةُ بَيْتًا فِيهِ كَلْبٌ أَوْ صُورَةٌ

*“The angels do not enter
that house in which there is a dog or a picture.”¹*

Knowledge can only be acquired through the angels. Therefore, a person should stay away from the condemned characteristics. In order to learn about bad manners, a person should read *Kitāb-ul-Akhlāq*, as it is not possible to explain the condemned characteristics in this concise book. A student should especially refrain from arrogance, as it is impossible for someone to acquire knowledge through arrogance. A poet said:

الْعِلْمُ حَرْبٌ لِّلْفَتَى الْمُتَعَالِي كَالسَّيْلِ حَرْبٌ لِّلْمَكَانِ الْعَالِي

*‘Knowledge is an enemy for an arrogant youth just as the flowing of
water is an enemy for a tall building.’*

A student should work extremely hard as a poet said:

بِجِدِّي لَا بِجِدِّ كُلِّ مَجْدٍ فَهَلْ جَدُّ بِلَا جِدِّ بِمَجْدِي

*‘Through my effort (I reach success) not through the effort of others.
Would I have any success without my effort being included?’*

فَكَمْ عَبْدٌ يَقُومُ مَقَامَ حُرٍّ وَكَمْ حُرٌّ يَقُومُ مَقَامَ عَبْدٍ

*‘There are many slaves standing in place of free men (through their efforts)
and there are many free men standing in place of slaves (through
heedlessness and laziness).’*

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, pp. 1165, Ḥadīṣ 2106

Hard work, persistence, and enthusiasm

It is very important for a student to work extremely hard, to remain punctual upon this, and to remain steadfast. As Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ has stated in the following Ayah:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

“And those who strove in our way - We shall surely show them Our paths.”

[Kanz-ul-Īmān (Translation of Quran)] (Part 21, Sūrah ‘Ankabūt, Verse 69)

He has stated further:

يَا حَيُّ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ ط

“O Yahyā, hold onto the book firmly.”

[Kanz-ul-Īmān (Translation of Quran)] (Part 16, Sūrah Maryam, Verse 12)

It is a famous saying:

مَنْ طَلَبَ شَيْئًا وَجَدَ وَجَدَ وَمَنْ قَرَعَ الْبَابَ وَلَجَ وَلَجَ

“Whoever sought something and worked hard for it, he will find it. Whoever knocked on a door and persisted, he will enter it.”

In the same way, another wise man said:

بِقَدْرِ مَا تَتَمَنَّى تَنَالُ مَا تَتَمَنَّى

“The amount you desire something you will gain what you desire.”

It is said that in order to seek something or understand it, there is a need for the effort of three people. The three people are:

1. The student
2. The teacher
3. The parents

Sayyidunā Shaykh Sa’iduddīn Shīrāzī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَافِي once recited before me a few wise verses written by Imām Shafi’i:

وَالْجِدُّ يَفْتَحُ كُلَّ بَابٍ مُغْلَقٍ الْجِدُّ يُدْنِي كُلَّ أَمْرٍ شَاسِعٍ

‘Effort brings close every matter which is far and effort opens all closed doors.’

وَأَحَقُّ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ بِالْهَمِّ أَمْرُوهُ ذُوْهِمَّةٍ يُبْلَى بِعَيْشٍ ضَيِّقٍ

‘Amongst the creation of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, the one who is most afflicted with grief and a tightened life is the one who is hardworking and full of spirit.’

وَمِنَ الدَّلِيلِ عَلَى الْقَضَاءِ وَحُكْمِهِ بُؤْسُ اللَّيْبِ وَطَيْبُ عَيْشِ الْأَحَقِّ

‘Amongst the proofs of Allah’s judgement and His command is the hard condition of a wise man and the prosperity of a stupid man.’

لَكِنَّ مَنْ رُزِقَ الْحِجْبُ حُرِمَ الْغِنَى ضِدَّانِ يَفْتَرِقَانِ أَى تَفَرَّقَ

‘Through the granting of intelligence, (the intelligent person) is deprived of prosperity. Two opposite entities (intelligence and prosperity) cannot gather together.’

Another poet has said:

تَبَنَّيْتُ أَنْ تُسَيِّ فَقِيهَا مُنَازِرًا بِغَيْرِ غَنَاءٍ وَالْجُنُونُ فُنُونُ

'If you desire to be a Faqīh (jurist) and Munāzir (debater) without struggle then this is your insanity.'

وَلَيْسَ اكْتِسَابُ الْمَالِ دُونَ مَشَقَّةٍ تُحْبِلُهَا فَالْعِلْمُ كَيْفَ يَكُونُ

'When wealth cannot be acquired without hardship and you bear hardship for it, then how can knowledge be acquired (without hardship)?'

Abū Tayyib has said:

وَلَمْ أَرَفِ عِيُوبَ النَّاسِ عَيْبًا كَنَقْصِ الْقَادِرِينَ عَلَى التَّامِ

"I never saw any fault amongst the faults of the people (worse than) the inability of those who have power to fulfill (a task) but it was left undone."

Staying awake during the nights is also extremely important for a student as a poet has said:

بِقَدْرِ الْكَدِّ تُكْتَسَبُ الْمَعَالِي فَمَنْ طَلَبَ الْعُلَا سَهَرَ اللَّيَالِي

'According to the amount of effort, you will gain elevations and the one who seeks elevations stays awake at night.'

تَرُومُ الْعِزَّ ثُمَّ تَنَامُ لَيْلًا يَغُوضُ الْبَحْرَ مَنْ طَلَبَ اللَّالِي

'You aim for respect then you sleep at night? The one who seeks pearls dives in the ocean.'

عُلُوُّ الْكَعْبِ بِالْهَمِّ الْعَوَالِي وَعِزُّ الْمَرْءِ فِي سَهَرِ اللَّيَالِي

'Elevation is through high aims and a person's respect is in the awakening of the night.'

وَمَنْ رَامَ الْعُلَا مِنْ غَيْرِ كَدٍّ أَضَاعَ الْعُمْرَ فِي طَلَبِ الْمَحَالِ

‘The one who aims for elevation without effort, he wastes his life seeking something which is impossible.’

تَرَكْتُ النَّوْمَ رَبِّي فِي اللَّيَالِي لِأَجْلِ رِضَاكَ يَا مَوْلى الْمَوَالِي

‘I left sleeping at night O my Rab for Your pleasure, O Patron of all patrons.’

فَوَفَّقْنِي إِلَى تَحْصِيلِ عِلْمٍ وَبَلِّغْنِي إِلَى أَقْصَى الْمَعَالِي

‘Grant me the ability to learn knowledge and take me to the fullest height.’

It is a saying of a wise man:

اِتَّخِذِ اللَّيْلَ جَمَلًا تُدْرِكُ بِهِ أَمَلًا

“Be busy the whole night, you will receive your desires.”

O beloved student, I also wrote in this regard:

مَنْ شَاءَ أَنْ يَحْتَوِيَ أَمَالَهُ جَمَلًا فَلْيَتَّخِذْ لَيْلَهُ فِي دُرُكِهَا جَمَلًا

‘Whoever wishes that his desires are all fulfilled, then he should spend his nights in order to gain them all.’

أَقْلِلْ طَعَامَكَ كَيْ تَحْظِيَ بِهِ ثَمَرًا إِنْ شِئْتَ يَا صَاحِبِي أَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْكَمَالَا

‘Decrease your food so that you can gain some benefit if you wish to gain perfection, O friend!’

A wise man has said:

مَنْ أَسْهَرَ نَفْسَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ فَقَدْ فَرِحَ قَلْبُهُ بِالنَّهَارِ

“The person who keeps himself awake at night then his heart is pleased during the day.”

O beloved student! In order to seek knowledge it is important that you learn during the early and latter part of the night. This is because the time between Maghrib and ‘Isha as well as the time of Sahri (prior to dawn) are both periods of great blessings. A poet has said:

يَا طَالِبَ الْعِلْمِ بَاشِرِ الْوَرَعَا وَجَنِّبِ النَّوْمَ وَاتْرُكِ الشَّبَعَا

“O student! Hold onto piety, turn away from sleep and turn away from eating fully.”

دَاوِمُ عَلَى الدَّرْسِ لَا تُفَارِقْهُ فَالْعِلْمُ بِالدَّرْسِ قَامَ وَارْتَفَعَا

“Continue to learn (through revision and discussion) and do not separate from this as it is through such learning that knowledge is established and raised.”

A student should take more and more benefit during his early days of youth as a poet has stated:

بِقَدْرِ الْكَدِّ تُعْطَى مَا تَرْوُمُ فَمَنْ رَامَ الْمُنَى لَيْلًا يَقُومُ

“According to effort, you will be granted what you aim for. The one who aims for many goals stays awake at night.”

وَأَيَّامَ الْحَدَاثَةِ فَاغْتَنِمْهَا أَلَا إِنَّ الْحَدَاثَةَ لَا تَدُومُ

Take it for granted that the days of a life are temporary so benefit from them, as a temporary thing is not long-lasting.

A student should also ensure that he do not put himself through too much hardship and should not place an extreme amount of burden upon himself which will lead to him being unable to do anything. He should be soft in regard to this matter, as softness is the origin of all things. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

أَلَا إِنَّ هَذَا الدِّينَ مَتِينٌ فَأَوْغِلْ فِيهِ بِرَفْقٍ وَلَا تُبَغِّضْ
إِلَى نَفْسِكَ عِبَادَةَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فَإِنَّ الْمُنَبَّتَ لَا أَرْضًا قَطَعَ وَلَا ظَهْرًا أَبْقَى

“Aware, this religion is strong. Walk on (the path of the religion) gently. Do not make the worship of Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ a burden upon yourselves.”

The Prophet ﷺ then gave an example of a person who places a lot of goods on his animal, due to which his animal becomes weak and thus this person is separated from those who are travelling with him and now his condition is such that he cannot cross the lands nor can he keep his animal alive.¹

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

نَفْسُكَ مَطِيَّتُكَ فَارْفُقْ بِهَا

“Your inner self (Nafs) is your animal therefore be soft with it.”

A student needs to have strong convictions and aims when learning knowledge. Just as a bird needs its wings in order to fly high, a student needs strong aims in order to reach heights.

¹ Kanz-ul-Ummāl, vol. 3, pp. 20, Ḥadīṣ 5374

Abū Ṭayyib has said:

عَلَى قَدْرِ أَهْلِ الْعَزْمِ تَأْتِي الْعَزَائِمُ وَتَأْتِي عَلَى قَدْرِ الْكِرَامِ الْمَكَارِمُ

“According to the strength of the convictions, you will reach the great matters and according to the virtue of a person he reaches nobility.”

وَتَعْظُمُ فِي عَيْنِ الصَّغِيرِ صِغَارُهَا وَتَصْغُرُ فِي عَيْنِ الْعَظِيمِ الْعَظَائِمُ

“Even the smallest of matters seem great in the eyes of the one who has little conviction whilst even the greatest of matters seem small in the eyes of the one who possesses great conviction.”

O beloved student! In order to gain anything, strong conviction and extreme struggle are pivotal. If a person has the conviction to memorise all of Imām Muhammad’s books and he works extremely hard and persists in this aim, then it is a certain fact that if he is not able to memorise the book word to word, he will at least be able to memorise the majority of the book or at least half. If, however, a person has great aims but he does not work hard in order to fulfil these aims or he works hard but does not have any aim, then both of these types of people will not gain anything but a little amount of knowledge.

Shaykh Raḍiuddīn Nayshāpūrī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْقَوِي has narrated an incident in his book, ‘*Makārim-ul-Akhlāq*’ that Sayyidunā Ṣulqarnayn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى intended to travel in order to gain control over the East and the West. He sought advice from the wise men as to what he should do. Ṣulqarnayn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى said, “I think I may be travelling uselessly in order to gain a bit of a kingdom as this world is little, mortal and extremely disgraceful. To gain (the wealth and authority of) this world is neither a great task nor is its attainment from the highest of achievements.” The wise men then advised him, “It would be extremely beneficial to travel in order to raise the word of truth

as this would be a means of attaining the blessings of this world and the hereafter.” Upon hearing this, Zulfarnayn رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ said, “This is surely the best idea.”

The Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُحِبُّ مَعَآلِيَ الْأُمُورِ وَيَكْرَهُ سَفْسَا فَهَهَا

“Indeed Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ loves the greatest of matters and detests the inferior matters.” (Al-Mu’jam-ul-Kabīr, vol. 3, pp. 131, Ḥadīṣ 2894)

A poet has said:

فَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِأَمْرِكَ وَاسْتَدِمَّهُ فَمَا صَلَّى عَصَاكَ كَمُسْتَدِيمٍ

Do not rush into your matter and keep struggling for it, as the crookedness of a stick is straightened through a determined effort.

Sayyidunā Imām-e-A’ẓam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَم once said to Imām Abū Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ, ‘You were not intelligent but your effort and persistence pushed you forward; therefore, always stay away from laziness, for laziness is a great calamity and it is wretched.’

Shaykh Imām Abū Naṣr Ṣaffār Anṣārī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْبَارِي has stated in his stanza:

يَا نَفْسُ يَا نَفْسُ لَا تُرَخِّي عَنِ الْعَمَلِ فِي الْبِرِّ وَالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ فِي مَهَلٍ

‘O soul, O soul! Do not delay in carrying out good deeds, being just and doing favours upon others when you are free.’

وَكُلُّ ذِي عَمَلٍ فِي الْخَيْرِ مُغْتَبِطٌ وَفِي بَلَاءٍ وَشُؤْمٍ كُلُّ ذِي كَسَلٍ

‘All those who carry out good deeds are envied whilst each lazy person is (embroiled) in affliction and misfortune.’

I have also written in this regard:

دَعِيَ نَفْسِي التَّكَاثُلَ وَالتَّوَانِي وَإِلَّا فَاثْبُتِي فِي ذِي الْهَوَانِ

‘O my soul, forsake laziness, otherwise remain amongst the disgraced.’

فَلَمْ أَرِ لِّلْكَسَالَى الْحَظَّ يُعْطَى سِوَى نَدَمٍ وَحِرْمَانِ الْأَمَانِ

‘I have not seen the lazy people being granted anything besides shame and being deprived of desires.’

كَمْ مِنْ حَيَاءٍ وَكَمْ عَجْزٍ وَكَمْ نَدَمٍ جَمَّ تَوَلَّدَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ كَسَلٍ

A human being earns shame, weakness and regret, including other negative qualities due to his laziness.

إِيَّاكَ عَنْ كَسَلٍ فِي الْبَحْثِ عَنْ شُبِّهِ فَمَا عَلِمْتَ وَمَا قَدْ شَذَّ عَنْكَ سَلِ

Do not be lazy in debating to get rid of a doubt. What you know (then فَالِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ) and as for that which is further (from your understanding) then ask (the knowledgeable people).

The pious predecessors رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى have stated, “One reason for the development of laziness is lack of concentration upon the virtues of knowledge. Therefore, a student with persistence should concentrate on the virtues of knowledge as well.

O beloved student! Wealth is something which will perish as Amīr-ul-Muminīn Sayyidunā ‘Alī Bin ‘Abī Ṭālib كَرَّمَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَجْهَهُ الْكَرِيمُ has stated:

رَضِينَا قِسْمَةَ الْجَبَّارِ فِينَا لَنَا عِلْمٌ وَلِلْأَعْدَاءِ مَالٌ

‘We are pleased with the distribution of our Rab amongst us. We have knowledge, while the enemies have wealth.’

فَإِنَّ الْمَالَ يَفْنَى عَنْ قَرِيبٍ وَإِنَّ الْعِلْمَ يَبْقَى لَا يَزَالُ

'Indeed wealth will soon perish, while knowledge will remain forever.'

In comparison to wealth, a person becomes known as a pious person through beneficial knowledge which continues even after his death, thus this is everlasting life.

Muftī-ul-Āimma Sayyidunā Shaykh Zāhīruddīn Ḥasan Bin ‘Alī قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ التَّوَرَانِي also known as Marghīnānī has stated:

الْجَاهِلُونَ فَمَوْتِي قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِمْ وَالْعَالِمُونَ وَإِنْ مَاتُوا فَأَحْيَاءُ

"The ignorant (are such that) they are dead before their (actual) death. The scholars (are such that) even after they (physically) die, they are alive."

Shaykh-ul-Islām Burhānuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْإِمِينِ has stated;

وَفِي الْجَهْلِ قَبْلَ الْمَوْتِ مَوْتُ لِأَهْلِهِ فَأَجْسَامُهُمْ قَبْلَ الْقُبُورِ قُبُورٌ

"And in ignorance is death for the ignorant prior to death and their bodies are like graves prior to (their actual) graves."

إِنَّ أَمْرًا لَمْ يَحْيَ بِالْعِلْمِ مَيِّتٌ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ حِينَ النُّشُورِ نُشُورٌ

"And a person who does not possess knowledge is a dead body and there is no resurrection (in terms of rewards and blessings) for him when resurrection will occur."

A poet has stated:

أَخُو الْعِلْمِ حَيٌّ خَالِدٌ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهِ أَوْ صَالُهُ تَحْتَ التُّرَابِ رَمِيمٌ

‘The possessor of knowledge is forever alive after his death even if his bones have decayed beneath the soil.’

وَذُو الْجَهْلِ مَيِّتٌ وَهُوَ يَمْشِي عَلَى الثَّرَى يُظَنُّ مِنَ الْأَحْيَاءِ وَهُوَ عَدِيمٌ

‘The ignorant is dead whilst he is walking on the earth. He is perceived to be from those who are alive whilst he is (actually) extinct.’

Another poet has said:

حَيَاةُ الْقَلْبِ عِلْمٌ فَاجْتَنِبْهُ وَمَوْتُ الْقَلْبِ جَهْلٌ فَاجْتَنِبْهُ

Life of hearts is knowledge; therefore, acquire it. Death of hearts is ignorance so refrain from it.

Shaykh-ul-Islām Burhānuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْمُبِينِ has stated:

ذَا الْعِلْمِ أَعْلَى رُتْبَةً فِي الْمَرَاتِبِ وَ مِنْ دُونِهِ عِزُّ الْعُلَى فِي الْمَوَاكِبِ

“The possessor of knowledge has the greatest rank amongst all the ranks and all other ranks are temporary like leadership and governance.”

فَذُو الْعِلْمِ يَبْقَى عِزُّهُ مُتَضَاعِفًا وَ ذُو الْجَهْلِ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ تَحْتَ التِّيَارِبِ

“The possessor of knowledge, his reverence remains and increases whilst the ignorant, after death he is beneath soil.”

فَهَيْهَاتَ لَا يَرْجُو مَدَاهُ مَنْ ارْتَقَى رُقًى وَلِيَ الْمُلْكِ وَ إِلَى الْكَتَائِبِ

“The leader of a nation and the commander of an army cannot reach the end of knowledge.”

سَأْمُلِي عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضَ مَا فِيهِ فَاسْمَعُوا فِي حَصْرٍ عَنْ ذِكْرِ كُلِّ الْمَنَاقِبِ

"I will write a few virtues of knowledge for you so listen as I am limited from recollecting all the virtues of knowledge."

هُوَ النُّورُ وَكُلُّ النُّورِ يَهْدِي عَنِ الْعَمَى وَذُو الْجَهْلِ مَرَّ الدَّهْرِ بَيْنَ الْغِيَاهِبِ

"It is light (Nūr) and all Nūr guides (away) from blindness, while the ignorant people throughout their lifetime cross the darkness of ignorance."

هُوَ الذَّرْوَةُ السَّمَاءِ تَحْمِي مَنْ التَّجَا إِلَيْهَا وَ يَمْشِي آمِنًا فِي التَّوَائِبِ

"Knowledge is an extremely high peak which grants refuge to whoever desires it and (therefore the one who desires knowledge) walks on (the paths of) calamities safely."

بِهِ يَنْتَجِي وَالنَّاسُ فِي غَفْلَاتِهِمْ بِهِ يَرْتَجِي وَالرُّوحُ بَيْنَ التَّرَائِبِ

"(Only) through knowledge can a person seek salvation, while humans are lost in heedlessness. It is through knowledge that one has hope when the soul is between the bones (at the time of Naz'a' – departure from this world)."

بِهِ يَشْفَعُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَنْ رَاحَ عَاصِيًا إِلَى دَرْكِ النَّيِّرَانِ شَرِّ الْعَوَاقِبِ

"It is through knowledge that a human being will intercede for a person who had left the world (and went) to the lowest part of Hell, the worst of results."

فَمَنْ رَامَهُ رَامَ الْمَارِبِ كُلِّهَا وَمَنْ حَازَهُ قَدَحَازَ كُلِّ الْمَطَالِبِ

“The one who aimed for knowledge (it is as though) he aimed for all purposes and whoever gathered knowledge, he has achieved all aims.”

هُوَ الْمَنْصَبُ الْعَالِي فِيَا صَاحِبَ الْحِجَا إِذَانِلَتْهُ هَوْنٌ بِفَوْتِ الْمَنَاصِبِ

“Knowledge is the greatest rank so O wise person! When you attain it, then do not care about the loss of other ranks.”

فَإِنْ فَاتَكَ الدُّنْيَا وَطِيبُ نَعِيمِهَا فَغَمِّضْ فَإِنَّ الْعِلْمَ خَيْرُ الْمَوَاهِبِ

“So if you lose the world and the best of its blessings, turn your eye away, for indeed knowledge (you possess) is the best of bestowed blessings.”

Another poet has said:

إِذَا مَا اعْتَزَّ ذُو عِلْمٍ بِعِلْمٍ فَعِلْمُ الْفِقْهِ أَوْلَى بِاعْتِرَازِ

‘When the knowledgeable people gain reverence through knowledge, then the science of Fiqh is the best and most worthy of being a means of reverence.’

فَكَمْ طِيبٌ يَفُوحٌ وَلَا كِبْسُكَ وَكَمْ طَيْرٌ يَطِيرُ وَلَا كِبَارِي

‘Many perfumes give fragrance but none is like Musk. Many birds fly but none is like an eagle.’

Another poet has said:

أَلْفِقْهُ أَنْفُسُ شَيْءٍ أَنْتَ دَاخِرُهُ مَنْ يَدْرُسُ الْعِلْمَ لَمْ تَدْرُسْ مَفَاخِرُهُ

‘Understanding is the most valuable of things which you are gathering. The one who learns knowledge, his glory is not destroyed.’

فَاكْسِبْ لِنَفْسِكَ مَا أَصْبَحْتَ تَجْهَلُهُ فَأَوَّلُ الْعِلْمِ اقْبَالٌ وَآخِرُهُ

‘Earn for yourself that (knowledge) which you do not know, for indeed beginning and end of knowledge is good fortune.’

Whatever has been written in regard to the pleasure of knowledge is enough to incline the person who has wisdom to learn knowledge.

The ways to decrease phlegm

1. Phlegm and other such things cause laziness in the body of a human being. The most experimented precaution for this is to eat less. According to one narration, seventy Prophets are unanimous in the fact that being very forgetful is due to having too much phlegm. Phlegm is caused by the drinking of too much water and drinking water too much is as a result of eating too much.
2. Another way to decrease phlegm is to eat dry bread.
3. To eat raisins on an empty stomach is beneficial in order to decrease phlegm.
4. Doing Siwāk (using Miswāk) gets rid of phlegm and increases eloquence and memory. Using Miswāk is a very beautiful Sunnah and due to this the reward of Ṣalāh and recitation of the Holy Quran increases.
5. Vomiting gets rid of phlegm and such things.

The person who wants to make it a habit to eat less, he should keep the benefits of eating less before him. Amongst the benefits of eating less is good health, being chaste and having the chance to make great sacrifice (Īṣār).

فَعَارُ ثُمَّ عَارُ ثُمَّ عَارُ شَقَاءُ الْمَرْءِ مِنْ أَجْلِ الطَّعَامِ

“Shame! Shame! Shame! The misfortune of a person is due to eating.”

It is narrated that the Noble Prophet ﷺ said:

ثَلَاثَةٌ نَفَرَ يُبْغِضُهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ غَيْرِ جُرْمٍ إِلَّا كُؤُلُ وَالْبَخِيلُ وَالْمُتَكَبِّرُ

“Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ detests three people without any (other) fault: the person who eats too much, the stingy person and the arrogant.”

A person should take into account the harms of eating too much food along with considering the benefits of eating less. Amongst the harms of eating too much food are facing various illnesses and feeling heavy. It is said:

الْبَطْنَةُ تُذْهِبُ الْفِطْنَةَ

“Filling of the stomach causes the concentration (of a person) to go.”

It is narrated from the Hakim Jālīnūs that a pomegranate has a lot of benefits in it, while there are lots of harms in a fish. However, eating a little amount of fish is better than eating a lot of pomegranates.

Amongst the harms of eating too much, a great harm is the waste of money. To eat after already having a full stomach is absolutely harmful. Such a person deserves punishment in the Judgement Day. Furthermore, the person who eats too much is disliked.

It is worthy of mentioning that in order to decrease the amount of food we eat, fatty and greasy food should be used. Tasty and good food should be eaten first. Food should not be eaten with a person who is hungry. It should be remembered that when too much food is consumed with a correct purpose, then there is no harm in eating too much. For example, a person wishes to eat more so that he can gain strength to offer Ṣalāh, to keep fast and to carry out those deeds which need energy, as they are difficult. In these situations, there is no harm in eating excessively.

Ways of commencing a lesson, its sequence and amount

Shaykh-ul-Islām Burhānuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْمُتَمِّين would always start a lesson on Wednesday. He would narrate a Ḥadīṣ in this regard and establish proof from it. The Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ بُدِيَ فِي يَوْمِ الْأَرْبَعَاءِ إِلَّا وَقَدَّتْ

“Nothing is commenced on Wednesday but that it reaches completion.”¹

This was the same manner of Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَم. Imām A’zam-e-Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَم has narrated this Ḥadīṣ from his teacher, Shaykh Qawāmuddīn Aḥmad Bin ‘Abdur Rashid عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْمُتَمِّين and I have heard from a few reliable people that Shaykh Abū Yūsuf Ḥamdānī قُرِيسِ سِرُّهُ الثُّورَانِي would stop until Wednesday in order to fulfil a good deed. Wednesday also possesses the speciality that Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ created Nūr (light) on it. This day is a day of misfortune for the unbelievers, while it is a day of blessings for the believers.

Sayyidunā Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَم has narrated from Shaykh Qāḍī ‘Umar Bin Imām ‘Abī Bakr Zarnūjī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي that the lessons for the beginner students should be so concise that if the student is to read the lesson twice, he can easily memorise it. Every day, one word should be increased until eventually even if the lesson becomes lengthy, the student will be able to memorise the lesson

¹ Kashf-ul-Khafā, vol. 2, pp. 163, Ḥadīṣ 2189

after reading it twice. The lesson should be gradually increased. If the lesson is made lengthy from the beginning and in order for the student to understand, there is a need to repeat oneself ten times then the student will habitually learn after repetition ten times. This habit will not go easily. It is said:

السَّبْقُ حَرْفٌ وَالتَّكَرَّارُ أَلْفٌ

*“The lesson should be one letter,
while repetition should be a thousand times.”*

It is suitable for a student to plan taking up a subject with the topic which is more understandable to his intellect than any other topic.

Shaykh Imām Sharafuddīn ‘Aqīlī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي used to state that according to him, the way of the Shuyūkh was correct when they would select summarised versions of large texts for the beginner students. This is because this type of text is easily understood and memorised. This way preserves one from becoming worried and it is traditionally the way of the majority of people.

It is important for a student to take the lesson from his teacher and after continuously repeating the lesson; he should preserve this knowledge by writing it down, as this is extremely beneficial.

A student should not write anything which he has not completely understood because this type of writing will trouble his temperament will take away his intelligence and waste his time.

A student should attempt to understand the lesson from his teacher, otherwise he should try to understand it by concentrating on it deeply and through repetition. When the lesson will be concise and

there will be more concentration, then comprehension of the lesson will be done properly. It is said:

حِفْظُ حَرْفَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ سَمَاعِ وَقْرَيْنِ وَفَهْمُ حَرْفَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ حِفْظِ وَقْرَيْنِ

“To memorise two words is better than listening to two great volumes and the comprehension of two words is better than the memorisation of two volumes.”

When a student becomes lazy in understanding a lesson and he does not even attempt to understand it then after doing this once or twice, it will become his habit to such an extent that he will not even understand the easy points of a lesson. A student should, therefore, refrain from being lazy in understanding a lesson but he should rather work hard and pray to Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ and beg Him as He accepts the Du’ā of all those who turn towards Him. Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, the Creator of the sea and the land, will never allow the person who has hope in Him to despair.

Imām Ajal Sayyidunā Qawāmuddīn Ibrāhīm Bin Ism’āil Şighār عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمَا recited the following verses which are narrated from Sayyidunā Qāḍī Khalīl Bin Aḥmad Sajazarī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمَا:

أُخْدِمِ الْعِلْمَ خِدْمَةَ الْمُسْتَفِيدِ وَأَدِمِ دَرْسَهُ بِعَقْلِ حَبِيدِ

“Serve knowledge like the one who benefits from it does and continuously learn (knowledge) with praiseworthy wisdom.”

وَإِذَا مَا حَفِظْتَ شَيْئًا أَعِدْهُ ثُمَّ أَكِّدْهُ غَايَةَ التَّأْكِيدِ

“When you memorise something, repeat it then strengthen it to the limits of strength.”

ثُمَّ عَلِّقْهُ كَيْ تَعُودَ إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَى دَرْسِهِ عَلَى التَّابِيدِ

“Then note it down so that you can come back to it and (so that) you can always find your lesson.”

وَإِذَا مَا أَمِنْتَ مِنْهُ فَوَاتًا فَأَنْتَدِبْ بَعْدَهُ لَشَيْءٍ جَدِيدِ

“When you become fearless of losing this lesson (in terms of memory), then hasten towards something new.”

مَعَ تَكْرَارٍ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْهُ اِغْتِنَاءً بِشَأْنِ هَذَا الْمَزِيدِ

“There should be the repetition of that which has already been learnt with preparation for further.”

ذَا كَرِ النَّاسَ بِالْعُلُومِ لِتَحْيَا لَا تَكُنْ مِنْ أُولَى النُّهَى بِبَعِيدِ

“Have scholarly discourse with the people so that knowledge can be kept alive and do not be far from the people of intellect.”

إِنْ كَتَمْتَ الْعُلُومَ أَنْسَيْتَ حَتَّى لَا تَرَى غَيْرَ جَاهِلٍ وَبَلِيدِ

“If you hide knowledge, then you will be made to forget until you will not be seen as anyone but an ignorant person who has no intellect.”

ثُمَّ أُجِمَّتْ فِي الْقِيَامَةِ نَارًا وَتَلَهَّبَتْ فِي الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيدِ

“Then you will be bridled on the Judgement Day with fire, thus suffering from a severe torment.”

It is important for a student that he continue to conduct discourses, debates and intellectual competitions. He should fulfil these things with concentration and reflection and he should stay away from

anger and causing mayhem. This is because debating and discussing is like an intellectual consultation and consultation is done in order to gain the truth. The truth can only be established through justice and concentration, not through anger and disturbances. If during a debate, it is somebody's intention that he would like to defeat his opponent then it is not permissible for such a person to do Munāẓarraḥ (debate) as Munāẓarraḥ is only permissible in order to make the truth manifest. It is not permissible for one to say something out of context nor is it permissible for a debater to trick the opponent. These actions are however permitted when the opponent does not have the intention to make the truth manifest but is in fact rebellious.

It is stated about Imām Muhammad Bin Yaḥyā رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ that when a difficult question would be posed to him and he would not know the answer, he would say:

مَا أَلْزَمْتُهُ لَا زِمٌ وَأَنَا فِيهِ نَاطِرٌ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ

“What you have brought forward is necessary and I will look into it. And above every knowledgeable there is one who knows.”

Debates and competitions are more beneficial in comparison to only revising, as there is reminiscence and further information when debating and competing. It is said:

مُطَارَحَةُ سَاعَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ تَكْرَارِ شَهْرٍ

“Competing for one hour is better than one month of revision.”

This can only occur when a debate is taking place with a just and naturally stable person. Beware that one should not have an intellectual

discussion with someone who is unstable (in his nature) and who enjoys disgracing others. This is because the nature of a human being accepts influence and characteristics transfer (from one person to another) and companionship definitely has an effect someday.

Khalil Bin Ahmad's aforementioned couplet possesses many benefits. Another poet has said:

الْعِلْمُ مِنْ شَرْطِهِ لِبَنٍ خَدَمَهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمْ خَدَمَهُ

'Amongst the conditions of knowledge for the one who serves it is that it makes all the people serve him.'

It is important for a student that he concentrate on the intricacies of knowledge at all times because these intricacies can only be apprehended through concentration.'

This is why someone has said:

تَأَمَّلْ تُدْرِكْ

"Deliberate, you will understand."

Before speaking it is absolutely necessary that one deliberate so that the conversation is full of purpose. This is because a conversation is like an arrow. This is why one should ponder before uttering any words so that the spoken words are proven to be purposeful. The author of '*Uṣūl-ul-Fiqh*' has stated that the main principle for a jurist and debater amongst everything is that they concentrate before speaking. Someone has said:

رَأْسُ الْعَقْلِ أَنْ يَكُونَ الْكَلَامُ بِالتَّثَبُّتِ وَالتَّأَمُّلِ

“The main principle of wisdom is that the conversation be strong and full of concentration.”

A poet has stated:

أَوْصِيكَ فِي نَظْمِ الْكَلَامِ بِخَمْسَةٍ إِنَّ كُنْتَ لِلْمُوصِي الشَّفِيقِ مُطِيعًا

‘I would like to advise you of five things in the form of poetry if you are prepared to accept the advice of a kind friend.’

لَا تُغْفَلَنَّ سَبَبَ الْكَلَامِ وَوَقْتَهُ وَالْكَيفَ وَالْكَمَّ وَالْمَكَانَ جَمِيعًا

‘Do not be heedless in regard to the purpose behind the discussion, its time, how you should be conversing, how long your conversation should be and also the place of your discussion.’

It is important for a student that he is always benefitting (with the light of knowledge) from someone at all times. The Noble Prophet ﷺ has stated:

الْحِكْمَةُ ضَالَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ أَيْنَمَا وَجَدَهَا أَخَذَهَا

“Wisdom is the lost inheritance of a believer. Wherever he finds it, he should get it.”¹

Someone has said:

خُذْ مَا صَفَا وَدَعْ مَا كُدَّرَ

“Hold onto the good and forsake what is impure.”

I heard Shaykh Imām Fakhruddīn Kāshānī قدس سره التو را ني who used to say that one of the maids of Imām Abū Yūsuf رحمه الله تعالى عليه was with Imām

¹ Sunan Tirmizī, vol. 4, pp. 314, Ḥadīṣ 2696; Firdaus-ul-Akhbār, vol. 1, pp. 352, Ḥadīṣ 2592

Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الصَّمَد as a trust. Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الصَّمَد once asked, “Do you remember anything now from the Fiqh (jurisprudence) of Imām Abū Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى?” The maid said, “I can’t remember anything else but I remember that Imām Abū Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى would say:

سَهْمُ الدَّوْرِ سَاقِطٌ

“Circulating share is invalid.”

Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الصَّمَد memorised this ruling, as he was himself confused about it. However, the maid’s words got rid of every doubt and confusion. From this we learn that it is possible to gain intellectual benefit from anyone.

Imām Abū Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى was once asked how he gained so much knowledge. He عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى replied:

مَا اسْتَنْكَفْتُ مِنَ الْإِسْتِفَادَةِ وَمَا بَخِلْتُ بِالْإِفَادَةِ

“I did not feel ashamed to learn from others nor was I stingy in benefitting others.”

Sayyidunā Ibn-e-‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُمَا was once asked as to how he رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ had gained so much knowledge. Sayyidunā Ibn-e-‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُمَا replied:

بِلِسَانٍ سَأُولٍ وَقَلْبٍ عَقُولٍ

“A questioning tongue and a wise heart”

In the early generations, due to excessive questioning, a student was known as ‘مَاتَقُول’. This was because it was the habit of the students at that time that they would often ask, ‘مَا تَقُول فِي هَذِهِ الْمَسْئَلَةِ’ i.e. *what do you say about this issue?*

Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَمُ became a great Faqīh (jurist) through asking questions, as he would have a lot of intellectual discussions and debates in his shop of clothes. From this we learn that it is possible to learn knowledge and jurisprudence whilst running a business.

It was a habit of Sayyidunā Abū Ḥafṣ Kabīr عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْقَدِيرُ that when he would leave in order to earn a living, he would also revise. If a student needs to work in order to fulfil his needs, then he should work and along with that he should continue his intellectual revision and intellectual discourse. He should never be lazy in this regard. A person whose body and mind is stable has no excuse which can allow him to forsake the seeking of knowledge and jurisprudence. No one can be poorer than Imām Abū Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى but in spite of everything, poverty and hardship could not stop him from seeking knowledge.

The person who has a lot of wealth, this pure wealth would be extremely good for him if he spent it in the way of sacred knowledge. A scholar was asked how he gained so much knowledge. The scholar replied, “Due to a rich (and generous) father.” The father used to maintain good relations with the knowledgeable people as a result of his wealth. So his action became the cause of increasing knowledge. His father’s action was a display of gratitude upon the blessing of knowledge and wisdom, and gratitude is a cause of development in blessings.

Sayyidunā Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَمُ stated, ‘Indeed I have sought knowledge through Ḥamd and Shukr in a way that

whenever I have fully understood any informative thing, I always say ‘الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ’. Thus my knowledge increases.’ Therefore, a student should express gratitude through his wealth, including his tongue and other parts of body. He should always consider knowledge and comprehension to be granted as a gift by Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, ask for guidance from Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, and establish a routine to make Du’ā to Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ tearfully. Indeed the one who seeks guidance from Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, He عَزَّوَجَلَّ grants him guidance. The Aĥl-ul-Ĥaqq i.e. the Aĥl-e-Sunnah Wal-Jama’at sought guidance from Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ Who is the Guide, the Manifest and the Pure. Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ granted them guidance and safeguarded them from misguidance, while the misguided sects remained afflicted with arrogance in regard to their opinions and intellects. They wished to find the truth using their intellect; therefore, they went astray.

The intellect is weak because it cannot grasp everything just as a person’s sight cannot grasp everything. Thus when these misguided people attempted to seek the truth using their intellects, it remained hidden from them. When they were unable to recognise the truth, they became misguided themselves and misguided others as well.

The Beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ has said:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

“The one who recognises himself recognises his Rab.”

(Kashf-ul-Khafā, vol. 2, pp. 234, Ĥadīṣ 2530)

It means that when a person recognises himself, then he automatically gains the power and cognition of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. A person should never trust his own self and his intellect, but he should rather trust Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ and a person should seek the truth from Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. As Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ has stated in the Holy Quran:

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ط

‘The one who trusts Allah, Allah is enough for him.’

[Kanz-ul-Īmān (Translation of Quran)] (Part 23, Sūrah Al-Ṭalāq, Verse 3)

Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ guides him to the straight path. If someone is rich, then he should never be stingy. Instead, he should seek refuge with Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ from stinginess. The Most Blessed Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

أَيُّ دَاءٍ أَدَّ وَأَمِنَ الْبُخْلِ

‘Which illness is worse than stinginess?’

(Al-Mu’jam-ul-Kabīr, vol. 19, pp. 81, Aḥādīṣ 163-164)

Imām Shams-ul-Āimma Ḥalwānī’s father was extremely poor and had a difficult life as he would sell sweets and he had a habit of sending sweets, etc. to jurists and requesting them to pray for his son. His generosity, devotion and extreme passion resulted in his son excelling in the levels of knowledge and became a renowned scholar of his time. Those who have been blessed with wealth should buy books and give them to the jurists. They should also assist in the publication of new books. All this will prove to be extremely helpful in the propagation of knowledge and understanding.

It is stated about Sayyidunā Imām Muhammad Bin Ḥasan رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ that he was so rich that three hundred people had been appointed to deal with his accounts. Imām Muhammad spent all of his money on the propagation of knowledge until eventually he did not even have one expensive set of clothes.

Imām Abū Yūsuf رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ once saw Imām Muhammad رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ in old, torn clothes so Imām Abū Yūsuf رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ sent a very

beautiful set of clothes to Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْقَبِي. Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْقَبِي refused and said, “Some people have been granted these blessings before us on the earth, while we will receive the blessings in the hereafter.” Even though accepting a gift is Sunnah, Imām Muhammad did not accept this gift. One reason for this can be that there is a chance that he would be disgracing himself by accepting this which is impermissible as the Most Beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ has stated:

لَيْسَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْ يُذِلَّ نَفْسَهُ

“It is not (permissible) for a believer to disgrace himself.”

(Jāmi’ Tirmizī, vol. 4, pp. 112, Ḥadīṣ 2261)

It is narrated that Shaykh Fakhr-ul-Islām Arsābandī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْقَوِي picked the peels of a watermelon from the floor, washed them and then ate them. A maid was standing nearby and she saw everything. The maid told her master whatever she had seen. As soon as the master heard that, he ordered that food be prepared and he invited the Shaykh to his home, so he could serve him. Shaykh Fakhr-ul-Islām Arsābandī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْقَوِي refused to accept the invitation to maintain his self-respect.

A student should also have integrity; he should protect his self-respect and he should not have greed for the wealth of others.

The Merciful Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ has said:

إِيَّاكَ وَالطَّمْعَ فَإِنَّهُ فَقْرٌ حَاضِرٌ

“Beware of greed, for it is present poverty.”

(Al-Mu’jam-ul-Awsaṭ, vol. 5, pp. 403, Ḥadīṣ 7753)

The person who has wealth should, therefore, refrain from stinginess, but rather he should spend money on himself and on others as the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

النَّاسُ كُلُّهُمْ فِي الْفَقْرِ مَخَافَةَ الْفَقْرِ

“People are dependent due to the fear of dependence.”

In the early days, it was the way of the students that they would learn a certain skill and then they would turn towards the seeking of knowledge. This was done by them so that desire for other people’s wealth would not grow in their heart. It is understood through wisdom and intelligence anyway that the person who desires to become rich through the wealth of others, he will become poor and destitute instead of becoming wealthy. An ‘Ālim (scholar) who is greedy will neither gain respect for knowledge nor can he speak the truth. This is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to seek refuge from greed as a form of teaching his Ummah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to supplicate in the following manner:

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ طَمَعٍ يُدْنِي إِلَى طَبَعٍ

“I seek refuge with Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ from the greed that takes one to defects.”

(Al-Musnad-lil-Imām Aḥmad Bin Ḥanbal, vol. 8, pp. 237, Ḥadīṣ 22082)

It is essential for a Muslim that he do not have hope in gaining anything from anyone besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ and it is also vital that he do not fear anyone besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. Does a human being only have hope in Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ? Does he only fear Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ? The answer to this will be found when we establish whether this person goes beyond the limits of Sharī’ah or not. This can be analysed when one ponders over whether the human being disobeys Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ due to

the fear of someone besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ or not. If he disobeys Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ due to the fear of someone apart from Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, then this person does not fear Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ alone, but rather he fears someone besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. If the person does not disobey Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ due to the fear of those besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ and he stays within the limits of Shari'ah, then it will be established that this person does not fear anyone besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, but rather he only fears Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. One can use this same ruling in order to establish how much one has hope in Allah's mercy and how much one has hope in those besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

A student should specify the amount of revision he will do and the amount of lessons he will learn because sciences cannot be firmly established in the heart unless one thoroughly revises the lessons.

A student should revise the previous lesson five times a day, the lesson from the day prior to that four times a day, the lesson from the day prior to that three times a day, the lesson from the day prior to that two times a day and the lesson that he learnt six days previously once a day. This way is the best way to preserve knowledge.

A student should not have the habit of revising in his heart (silently) but he should actually be active and alert when reading the lesson and revising it. One should not however read and revise so loudly that he gets quickly tired and due to this, he forsakes memorisation of the lesson. As the best of matters are in the middle way, the student should adopt the middle way between loudness and silence.

(Al-Muṣannaf-li-Ibn 'Abī Shaybah, vol. 8, pp. 246, Ḥadīṣ 13)

It is narrated that when Imām Abū Yūsuf رَحِمَهُ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ would have scholarly discussions with the great jurists, he would express great awareness and freshness. His son-in-law was once present in an intellectual conversation. The son-in-law said that he was shocked

that his father-in-law had been hungry for five days but in spite of that he was so fresh and alert.

A student should never take leave or miss any lessons, as this is very harmful for a student.

Shaykh-ul-Islām Burhānuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْمُبِين used to say that he had excelled beyond his fellow classmates due to the fact that he never missed any class.

A certain incident about Shaykh-ul-Islām Imām Isbījānī قُدْسَ سِرُّهُ التُّورَانِي is mentioned that when he was a student and was busy seeking sacred knowledge, the department of education remained closed for twelve years due to a revolution that occurred in the country. When the Shaykh saw that, he took one of his class fellows and they went to a secret place so that it was made possible to seek knowledge. For twelve years, the students learnt together until eventually the companion of the Shaykh excelled and became renowned, as the ‘Shaykh-ul-Islām’ of the Shafi’i school of thought and the Shaykh himself was also Shafi’i.

Shaykh Fakhr-ul-Islām Qāḍī Khān عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ الرَّحْمَنِ has stated, ‘It is important for someone who is learning Fiqh (jurisprudence) that he memorise one book of Fiqh forever so that it becomes easier for him to gain further information in this science.’



Importance of trust

During his studies, it is essential for a student to have trust in Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ and it is important that he do not fear or have any sort of grief in regard to livelihood and nor do he occupy his heart in such thought due to livelihood. Sayyidunā Imām-e-A’zam Abū Ḥanīfah عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْأَكْرَمُ narrated on the authority of Sayyidunā ‘Abdullah Ḥasan Zubaydī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ that the Noble Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ has said:

مَنْ تَفَقَّهَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ
كَفَاهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى هَمَّهُ وَرَزَقَهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

“The one who gains understanding of the religion of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ secures his needs and provides him livelihood from that place where he cannot imagine.”

(Jāmi’ Bayān-ul-‘‘Ilm, pp. 66, Ḥadīth 198)

The person whose heart is always busy in the thought of livelihood, nourishment and clothes, such a person cannot spare enough time for the great stations of his character and nor can he have time for those issues which are of great worth. A poet has said in regard to such a person whilst criticising him:

دَعِ الْمَكَارِمَ لَا تَرْحَلْ لِبُغْيَتِهَا وَاقْعُدْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الطَّاعِمُ الْكَاسِي

“Leave the stations (of character). Do not travel in order to gain them. Sit, for you are an eater and wearer (these are your only jobs).”

A person once requested Mansur Ḥallāj to advise him. Mansur Ḥallāj said to the man, “Remember that your inner self (Nafs) is such

that if you do not keep it busy in good deeds, then it will make you busy in following its desires.” Therefore, everyone should therefore keep themselves busy in carrying out good deeds so that their inner selves cannot engross them in following desires. An intelligent person should not worry about the world. Worry and grief cannot get rid of calamity nor can they benefit anyone. To worry and feel grief is extremely harmful for the heart, brain and body of a person and it brings a great void in carrying out good deeds. A person should worry about the hereafter rather than worrying about the world, as worrying about the hereafter is extremely beneficial. The Most Beloved Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ ذُنُوبًا لَا يُكَفِّرُهَا إِلَّا هُمُ الْمَعِيشَةُ

“Indeed there are certain sins which can only be compensated through worry of (earns of) living.”

(Al-Mu’jam-ul-Awsat, vol. 1, pp. 42, Ḥadīṣ 102)

Worry in regard to livelihood mentioned in the Ḥadīṣ is not to the extent that good deeds are hindered due to it and even during Ṣalāḥ, a person cannot keep his heart present due to this worry, but rather this worry is such that it does not bring disturbance to one’s worship. When the worry of livelihood is like this, then it is in conformity with worry in regard to the hereafter.

It is important for a student that he should stay away from worldly matters as much as he can. This is why the early scholars used to travel in order to learn sacred knowledge.

When a student travels, he should bear the distresses he faces with a smile as Sayyidunā Mūsā عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَام has stated in regard to travelling for the sake of knowledge:

لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾

“We have faced much hardship from this journey.”

[Kanz-ul-Īmān (Translation of Quran)] (Part 15, Sūrah Kahf, Verse 62)

Sayyidunā Mūsā عَلَيْ نَبِيِّنَا وَعَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَام had travelled many times during his physical life but he never mentioned distress in regard to any apart from the travel he embarked upon for the sake of knowledge, as he wished to make it known that the path of knowledge is not free from suffering. Knowledge is a great thing and according to the majority of scholars, seeking knowledge is more virtuous than Jihād. It is befitting that the action which has more reward will be harder to carry out. The person who bears the distresses that he faces on the path of learning the Dīn, he will gain such pleasure from this which will be greater than all the pleasures of the world.

When Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَامِلَةُ would stay awake all night and eventually be successful in solving an extremely difficult ruling, then he would state how the pleasure that he was feeling could never be felt by the princes of the world.

It is extremely important for a student that he do not concentrate on anything besides seeking the knowledge of (Islamic) jurisprudence. Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَامِلَةُ has stated that the time of learning the Dīn is from the cradle to the grave. If some unfortunate person wishes to turn away from learning the Dīn for even a second, then he should fear, lest time turns its face away from him. This is because weak desire can never be fruitful.

A Faqīh (jurist) came to visit Imām Abū Yūsuf عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى at the time of Imām Abū Yūsuf's death. When Imām Abū Yūsuf's soul was about to depart from this world, he asked the Faqīh in a display of what is

the importance of knowledge whether throwing stones at the Jimār (during Hajj) is more virtuous whilst riding an animal or it is more virtuous on foot. When the Faqīh could not answer, Imām Abū Yūsuf رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ gave the reply himself. Thus it is important for a Faqīh that he remain busy learning the Islamic jurisprudence at all times and that is how he will be able to gain pleasure from seeking the knowledge.

Someone asked Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الصَّمَد in a dream:

كَيْفَ كُنْتُ فِي حَالِ النَّزْعِ؟

“How was your condition at the time of death?”

Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الصَّمَد replied, “I was deliberating on the matter of servants who are Makātib (who have an agreement with their owners that they will be free if they pay an agreed amount of money) and due to this I did not even realise when my soul departed.”

It is said that Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الصَّمَد said during the last part of life, “The ruling in regard to the Makātib servants kept me so occupied that I had no opportunity to prepare for the Day.” This was the humility of Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الصَّمَد. (One can comprehend from the aforementioned narrations how busy he was in seeking the knowledge.)



Suitable time to gain knowledge

It is said:

وَقْتُ التَّعَلُّمِ مِنَ الْمَهْدِ إِلَى اللَّحْدِ

“The time for learning the Dīn is from the cradle to the grave.”

The best time to acquire knowledge is during the early days of one's youth and (in terms of hours) at the time of Saḥrī and between Maghrib and 'Ishā. Since this is a discussion in regard to excellence, a student should always be busy acquiring the knowledge. If he is tired of one subject, he should learn another. It is stated about Sayyidunā Ibn-e-‘Abbas رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُمَا that when he got tired of learning ‘Ilm-ul-Kalām, he would ask for a collection of poetry and read it.

Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ الصَّمَد would always remain awake at night. He would have many types of books with him. When he got tired of learning one subject, he would begin to learn another.

Imām Muhammad عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ الصَّمَد would have water near to him, so when drowsiness would overcome him, he would splash water over his eyes. He would say, “Drowsiness is due to heat; therefore, one should get rid of it with cold water.”

Importance and excellence of kindness and advice

A student should be extremely friendly and instead of being jealous of others, he should advise them because jealousy can never benefit anyone but it always causes harm. Shaykh-ul-Islām Burhānuddīn رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ has stated, “Often the son of an ‘Ālim (scholar) is also an ‘Ālim because a scholar always desires that his students become scholars and due to the blessings that come due to this love, kindness and selflessness that he has for others, his son will also become an ‘Ālim one day.’

It is narrated that Sadr-ul-Ajal Burhān-ul-Āimma رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ had selected a period of time in the afternoon to teach his two sons, Ṣadr-e-Shahīd Ḥasāmuddīn and Ṣadr-e-Sayyidunā Tājuddīn رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِمَا after finishing his duty of teaching his students. One day his two sons complained, ‘We felt tired quickly in the afternoon therefore we want you to teach us before teaching the other students.’ Shaykh Burhān-ul-Āimma رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ said, “It was important to teach the students who are travellers and come from different parts of the world to learn from me.” Thus due to the kindness these two sons of the Shaykh showed to the other students, they intellectually exceeded many of the jurists of their time.

A student should always stay away from fights and disputes which waste a lot of time. A wise man has said:

الْمُحْسِنُ سَيُجْزَى بِإِحْسَانِهِ وَالْمُسِيءُ سَتَكْفِيهِ مَسَاوِيهِ

“The one who does good will be rewarded for his good deed one day, while the wrongdoer’s bad deeds are enough for him.”

Rukn-ul-Islām Muhammad Bin ‘Abī Bakr also known as Muftī Khāwahīr Zādāh رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ said that Sulṭān-ush-Sharī’ah Yūsuf Haddānī قُدَّسَ سِرُّهُ التُّورَانِي has stated:

لَا تَجْزِ إِنْسَانًا عَلَى سُوءٍ فَعَلِهِ سَيَكْفِيهِ مَا فِيهِ وَمَا هُوَ فَاعِلُهُ

“You should not punish a human being due to his bad deeds but what state he is in and what he does is enough for him.”

The great scholars of the early generation have stated that the person who is filled with the anger which is inciting him to destroy an enemy, he should read the aforementioned couplet many times.

A poet has said:

إِذَا شِئْتَ أَنْ تَلْقَى عَدُوَّكَ رَاغِبًا وَتَقْتُلَهُ غَمًّا وَتُحْرِقَهُ هَبًّا

‘If you wish that you bring your enemy’s nose into soil and you wish that you can kill him in the fire of calamity....’

فَرُمْ لِلْعُلَا وَازْدَدْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّهُ مَنِ ارْزَادَ عِلْمًا زَادَ حَاسِدُهُ غَمًّا

‘...Then you should aim for elevation and increase yourself in knowledge. The one who developed in knowledge, the one who is jealous of him shall increase in terms of grief.’

O beloved student! You should always remain busy with your work and refrain from attempting to defeat your enemies. When you concentrate on your work and gain an elevated status, then your enemy will automatically be defeated. You should avoid creating enmity over inferior issues, otherwise it will disgrace you and will also waste your precious time. You, as a student, should be patient

and forbearing especially when facing the ignorant people. Sayyidunā ‘Īsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام has said:

إِحْتَمِلُوا مِنَ السَّفِيهِ وَاحِدَةً كَي تَرْبَحُوا عَشْرًا

“Bear the words of the stupid people once so that you can be rewarded tenfold.”

Another poet has said:

بَلَوْتُ النَّاسَ قَرْنًا بَعْدَ قَرْنٍ فَلَمْ أَرَ غَيْرَ خِتَالٍ وَقَالَ

‘I tested the people generation after generation. I did not see anything but arrogant people and those who hold hatred in their hearts.’

وَلَمْ أَرَفِي الْخُطُوبِ أَشَدَّ وَقَعًا وَأَصْعَبَ مِنْ مُعَادَاةِ الرِّجَالِ

‘I did not see anything harsher and more difficult than the enmity of the people.’

وَذُقْتُ مَرَارَةَ الْأَشْيَاءِ طُرًّا فَمَا شَيْءٌ أَمْرُ مِنَ السُّؤَالِ

‘I tasted many of the sourest things. There is nothing sourer than asking (begging).’

O beloved student! Do not have suspicion in regard to the Muslims. It is suspicion which creates enmity and it is forbidden (Ḥarām). The Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

“Think good of the believers.” طُنُّوا بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ خَيْرًا

(Al-Mu’jam-ul-Kabīr, vol. 23, pp. 156, Ḥadīṣ 239)

Suspicion in regard to a Muslim occurs due to negative thoughts and bad intentions. Abū Ṭayyib has said:

إِذَا سَاءَ فِعْلُ الْمَرْءِ سَاءَتْ ظُنُونُهُ وَصَدَّقَ مَا يَعْتَادُهُ مِنْ تَوَهُّمٍ

‘When a person’s actions are bad, his thoughts become polluted until he begins to accept the delusions that are in his mind.’

وَعَادَى مُحِبِّهِ بِقَوْلِ عُدَاتِهِ وَأَصْبَحَ فِي لَيْلٍ مِّنَ الشَّكِّ مُظْلِمٍ

‘(This person who has negative thoughts for others) holds enmity with his loved ones upon the comments of his enemies and he even spends his days in the dark nights of doubt.’

Another poet has said:

تَنَحَّ عَنِ الْقَبِيحِ وَلَا تُرِدْهُ وَمَنْ أَوْلَيْتَهُ حَسَنًا فَرَدْهُ

‘Stay away from the bad actions and do not return to them and whoever you plan to do good to, increase yourself in goodness.’

سَتُكْفَى مِنْ عَدُوِّكَ كُلِّ كَيْدٍ إِذَا كَادَا لِعَدُوٍّ فَلَا تُكِدْهُ

‘You will be freed from all the deceptions of your enemy. When your enemy deceives you, do not deceive him.’

Shaykh ‘Abul Fath Bustī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي has stated:

ذُو الْعَقْلِ لَا يَسْلَمُ مِنْ جَاهِلٍ يَسُومُهُ ظُلْمًا وَاعْنَاتًا

“A wise man is not free from (the harm) of an ignorant man. An ignorant man targets him oppressively and with transgression.”

فَلْيُخْتَرْ السَّلَامُ عَلَى حَرْبِهِ وَلْيُلْزَمِ الْإِنْصَاتُ إِنْ صَاتَا

“(A good person) should choose peace upon the fight of his enemy and he should maintain silence.”

How to obtain benefit

A student should always be busy and active so that he can gain perfection. The best way of learning and benefitting for a student is to always have a pen and an inkpot with him, so he can immediately write those points which are beneficial. It is said:

مَنْ حَفِظَ فَرَّوْ مَنْ كَتَبَ شَيْئًا قَرَّ

“The one who memorised something, it will flee from him and the one who writes something, it is established.”

It is said, “Knowledge is that which is gained after it is imparted by the scholars because knowledge is the essence of their life.” Whatever the scholars hear, they safeguard that which is the best and the most beautiful and whatever they utter is the best of what they have safeguarded.’

I heard Shaykh-ul-Islām Sayyidunā Adīb Mukhtār عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمَا saying, “Sayyidunā Ḥilāl Bin Yāsir رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ stated that he saw the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ teaching the knowledge and wisdom to the Ṣaḥābah (companions). He requested, “O the Prophet of Allah! Teach me whatever you taught the companions.” The Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ asked, ‘Do you have an inkpot with you.’ Sayyidunā Ḥilāl رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ replied, “I have no inkpot with me.” The Beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ stated, “O Ḥilāl Bin Yāsir, do not separate the inkpot from yourself because the inkpot and the one who has inkpot, they both are good until the Judgement Day.’

Sadr Shaḥīd Ḥasāmuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمَا said when advising his son, Shamsuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمَا, “You should learn something from

knowledge and wisdom every day. One day this knowledge will gather and become a great treasure.'

It is stated about Sayyidunā 'Aṣam Bin Yūsuf رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ that he once bought a pen in return for one thousand dinars so that he could write those things which are beneficial.

O beloved student! Life is extremely short and the ocean of knowledge is extremely vast. A student should not waste his time at all. He should consider his nights and free time as a blessing and obtain benefit from them. Sayyidunā Mu'āz Bin Rāzī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي has stated:

الَّيْلُ طَوِيلٌ فَلَا تُقْصِرْهُ
بِمَنَامِكَ وَالنَّهَارُ مُضِيٌّ فَلَا تُكَدِّرْهُ بِآثَامِكَ

"The night is long so don't shorten it with your sleep.

The day is enlightened so don't make it impure with your sins."

A student should value the companionship of the elders and he should benefit from them as much as he can. This is because that which he forsakes can never be gained by him again. This was explained by our beloved teacher, Shaykh-ul-Islām Burhānuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْوَالِي (author of Al-Ĥidāyah) as he humbly hinted towards this lesson when he said, "I found the time of many elders but sadly I could not obtain benefit from them."

Upon the loss of gaining benefit, I wrote:

لَهْفًا عَلَى فُوتِ التَّلَاقِ لَهْفًا مَا كُلُّ مَا فَاتَ وَيَفْنَى وَيُلْفَى

"Sorrow, sorrow! Sorrow upon the loss of companionship (of the elders)! Whatever perishes can never be regained."

Sayyidunā ‘Alī كَرَّمَ اللهُ تَعَالَى وَجْهَهُ الْكَرِيم has stated, “When you begin a task, then become engrossed in it to such an extent that you are always busy attempting to complete it. Turning away from the knowledge of the Dīn is enough for disgrace in this world and the next. Therefore one should seek refuge with Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ from this throughout the night and day.”

A student should be patient upon the calamities and disgraces he has to face on the path of knowledge. Flattery is indeed a condemned action but if a student has to do this then it is fine as a student has to sometimes flatter his teachers and fellows. It is said:

الْعِلْمُ عِزٌّ لَا ذُلَّ فِيهِ وَلَا يُدْرِكُ إِلَّا بِذُلٍّ لَا عِزَّ فِيهِ

“Knowledge is such a respect that there is no disgrace in it and every respect is only gained after disgrace.”

A poet has stated:

أَرَى لَكَ نَفْسًا تَشْتَهِي أَنْ تُعِزَّهَا فَلَسْتَ تَنَالُ الْعِزَّ حَتَّى تُذِلَّهَا

“I see that you have an inner self (Nafs) which you wish to grant respect but you will not gain respect until you disgrace it.”

Piety when acquiring knowledge

Some pious people have narrated a Ḥadīṣ in this regard from the Noble Prophet ﷺ who said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَتَوَرَّعْ فِي تَعْلُمِهِ ابْتَلَاهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِأَحَدٍ ثَلَاثَةِ أَشْيَاءٍ إِمَّا أَنْ يُمَيِّتَهُ فِي شَبَابِهِ أَوْ يُوقِعَهُ فِي الرِّسَايَةِ أَوْ يَبْتَلِيَهُ بِخِدْمَةِ السُّلْطَانِ

“The one who did not become pious during his studies, Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ will test him with one of three things. Either He makes him die in his youth or Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ sends him into village after village (helpless) or Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ afflicts him with the slavery of the rulers.”

The more pious a student is, the more beneficial his knowledge will be and the easier it will become for him to seek knowledge and the fruits (results) of such knowledge become obvious. The greatest piety for a student is that he should refrain from eating, sleeping and talking excessively. If it is possible, a student should abstain from junk food and that food which is sold in the markets. This is because food from the market brings a person closer to deception and filth, while it also distances a person from the remembrance of Allah عزَّوَجَلَّ. This is because the poor and destitute people look at the food which is sold in the markets and because they cannot buy that food due to their destitution, they are disheartened, thus blessings are removed from that food.

It is narrated that Imām Jalīl Sayyidunā Muhammad Bin Faḍl رحمه الله تعالى عليه did not even eat food from the markets during his studies. His father used to stay in a village and prepare food for his son to

bring it on every Friday. One day when his father came with the prepared food, he saw the bread, bought from the market, in the room of Sayyidunā Muhammad Bin Faḍl رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ. As soon as his father saw this, he was extremely furious and did not talk to his son. Sayyidunā Muhammad Bin Faḍl رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ explained, “I did not buy this bread from the market but my friend had brought it to me without my permission.” His father started rebuking him, “If you had had (the characteristics of) humility and piety in you, your friend would not have had the audacity to do this.” This is an example of how great the piety of the great leaders of Islam is. This is why these blessed souls have always been busy in the propagation of knowledge and it is due to these sacrifices that their names will remain prominent until the Judgement Day.

A pious jurist once advised a student, “It is necessary for you to stay away from backbiting and to refrain from talkative students. The jurist explained how the one who makes useless talk will waste the life and the time of this student.

It is also from the pious actions that people avoid the companionship of those who bicker, sin and waste their time in useless things and instead seek companionship with the pious, as companionship has an effect which will become apparent one day. A student should always sit facing the Qiblaḥ and act upon the Sunnaḥ of the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ strictly. A student should consider the prayers of others to be blessings and he should always save himself from the curse of an oppressed person.

It is narrated that two students went overseas in order to seek knowledge. They both studied together for two years. When they both returned to their hometown after two years, one had become a Faqīḥ (jurist), while the other was void of knowledge and excellence. The scholars and jurists of the hometown researched into the

situation and manner in which the two students behaved, including how they sat and how they revised, etc. The scholars found that the one who had returned as a jurist had the habit of facing the Qiblah when revising, while the one who was void of knowledge used to sit lazily, with his back towards the Qiblah. The jurists and scholars came to the conclusion that the student had become a jurist through the blessings of facing the Qiblah. To face the Qiblah whilst being seated is Sunnah. There is also a chance that this was a result of the prayers made by the pious, as there is no town which does not have pious people in it. It is entirely possible that one of these pious people prayed for this student. It is, therefore, important that a student do not be lazy in regard to etiquette and Sunnah because the one who is lazy in maintaining etiquette, he is also lazy in Sunnah and the one who is lazy in acting upon the Sunnah, he will soon be deprived of the obligations. The unfortunate person who is deprived of the obligations will be deprived on the Judgement Day. A student should punctually perform Nafl (supererogatory) Ṣalāh and he should always take into consideration the fear and devotion that should be with a person when he is performing Ṣalāh because these things will prove to be helpful in his seeking of knowledge.

Shaykh Jalīl Ḥajjāj Najamuddīn ‘Umar Bin Muhammad Nasfi عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ has stated in his poetry:

كُنْ لِلْأَمْرِ وَالنَّوَاهِي حَافِظًا وَعَلَى الصَّلَاةِ مُوَظِّبًا وَمُحَافِظًا

‘Be punctual in (carrying out) the commanded and (in avoiding) the forbidden and be punctual in Ṣalāh.’

وَاطْلُبْ عُلُومَ الشَّرْعِ وَاجْهَدْ وَاسْتَعِنْ بِالطَّيِّبَاتِ تَصِرْ فَقِيهًا حَافِظًا

‘Seek the sciences of Shari’ah and work hard and take assistance from good actions. You will become a great jurist.’

وَأَسْأَلُ إِلَهَكَ حِفْظَ حِفْظِكَ رَاغِبًا فِي فَضْلِهِ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا

‘Ask your Allah for the preservation of your memory through His great favour, as Allah is the best of protectors.’

The following stanza is also written by Shaykh Sayyidunā Najamuddīn عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْمُبِين:

أَطِيعُوا وَاجِدُوا وَلَا تَكُسَلُوا وَأَنْتُمْ إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ تَرْجِعُونَ

“Obey, work hard and do not be lazy, as you are to return to your Rab.

وَلَا تَهْجَعُوا فَيَخِيَارُ الْوَرَى قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ

“Do not sleep at night, for the best of creation are they who sleep little at night.”

A student should always have books with him so that he can revise as soon as he is free. A wise man has said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ دَفْتَرٌ فِي كَيْبِهِ لَمْ تَثْبُتِ الْحِكْمَةُ فِي قَلْبِهِ

“The one who does not have a book under his sleeve, wisdom cannot be established in his heart.”

It is beneficial for him to keep a notebook with him as well so that he can write down whatever beneficial thing he hears. He should also keep an inkpot with him so that there is no difficulty in writing down the main points he hears as was mentioned in the Ḥadīṣ of Hilāl Bin Yāsir رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ previously.



That which improves memory and that which causes forgetfulness

To work hard, to value the time, to eat less than appetite, to offer Ṣalāh-tut-Tahajjud and recitation of the Holy Quran are at the forefront of the means to improve one's memory. It is said that there is nothing else which can improve memory more than looking at the Holy Quran and reading it. It is more virtuous to recite the Quran by looking at it.

Sayyidunā Shaddād Bin Ḥakīm عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَرِيم saw one of his companions in a dream and asked him, "Which thing have you found the most beneficial?" The companion replied, "To look at the Holy Quran and read it."

A student should recite the following when he picks up a book:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ
وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ عَدَدَ كُلِّ
حَرْفٍ كُتِبَ وَيُكْتَبُ أَبَدًا لَا بَدِينَ وَ دَهْرًا لَا هَرِيرِينَ

After every Ṣalāh the following Wazīfah (incantation) should be recited:

أَمَنْتُ بِاللَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْأَحَدِ الْحَقِّ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَكَفَرْتُ بِمَا سِوَاهُ

A student should send Ṣalāt upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ in abundance, as the Noble Prophet ﷺ is the mercy for the universe. A poet (Imām Shafi’ī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْكَافِي) has stated:

شَكُوتُ إِلَى وَكِيعٍ سُوءَ حِفْظِي فَأَرْشَدَنِي إِلَى تَرْكِ الْمَعَاصِي

“I complained to Sayyidunā Wakī’ (my teacher) of bad memory. He guided me to forsake sins.”

فَإِنَّ الْحِفْظَ فَضْلٌ مِّنْ إِلَهِ وَفَضْلُ اللَّهِ لَا يُعْطَى لِعَاصِي

“For memory is a blessing from Allah and the blessings of Allah are not given to a sinner.”

In the same way, using Miswāk, honey, gum with sugar and eating twenty one raisins also strengthens memory, granting a human being cure for many illnesses. Eating those things (already mentioned earlier in the book) which get rid of phlegm also help to improve the memory.

Amongst the things which decrease memory are to commit sins excessively, to be worried about worldly matters, to be busy in unnecessary things, to possess love for the world and those things (already mentioned earlier in the book) which produce phlegm.

We have already mentioned that it is not suitable for a student to worry about worldly matters, as worry in this regard is a total loss and there is no benefit in this anxiety. This sort of worry causes the heart to be darkened, while worrying about the hereafter enlightens the heart. The effect of this becomes apparent in Ṣalāh because the worry about the world hinders him from goodness, while worry in regard to the hereafter encourages him towards goodness. It should

be remembered that performing Ṣalāh with humility and presence of heart, and keeping busy in seeking knowledge, get rid of grief and worries.

Sayyidunā Naṣr Bin Ḥasan Marghīnānī قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ الثُّورَانِي has stated in his Qaṣīdah:

إِعْتَنِ نَصْرَبْنَ الْحَسَنَ فِي كُلِّ عِلْمٍ يُخْتَزَنُ

“Prepare O Nasr Ibn Ḥasan to learn every science which can be treasured.”

ذَاكَ الَّذِي يَنْفِي الْحَزْنَ وَ غَيْرُهُ لَا يُؤْتَمَنُ

“This is that which nullifies woes and other things apart from (learning knowledge) cannot be trusted.”

Shaykh Imām Ajal Najamuddīn ‘Umar Bin Muhammad Nasfī عَلَيْهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ الْعَوَى once said to his maid who had offspring from him:

سَلَامٌ عَلَى مَنْ تَيَمَّمْتَنِي بِظَرْفِهَا وَلَمْعَةِ خَدَّيْهَا وَلَمَحَةِ طَرْفِهَا

“Salutations to the one who has fascinated me with the freshness of her cheeks and the respectability of her gaze.”

سَبَّتَنِي وَأَصْبَتَنِي فَتَاءٌ مَلِيحَةٌ تَحَيَّرَتِ الْأَوْهَامُ فِي كُنْهِ وَصْفِهَا

“I have been captured in love by a beautiful young woman. The minds are amazed when they look at the reality of her characteristics.”

فَقُلْتُ ذَرِينِي وَاعْذُرِينِي فَإِنِّي شُغِفْتُ بِتَحْصِيلِ الْعُلُومِ وَكَشَفِهَا

“I told her to leave me and excuse me, for I am busy seeking knowledge and making it manifest.”

وَلِي فِي طِلَابِ الْعِلْمِ وَالْفَضْلِ وَالتَّقَى غِنًى عَنْ غِنَاءِ الْغَانِيَاتِ وَعَرَفِهَا

“I have independence from the songs of beautiful women and their smell due to being engrossed in seeking knowledge, virtue and piety.”

Causes of forgetting knowledge

Amongst those things which cause knowledge to be lost are eating fresh coriander, eating sour apples, looking at the one being hanged, reading gravestones, walking in between a row of camels, leaving lice alive on the ground and putting patches on a pillow.

That which brings livelihood and that which reduces it; that which increases it and that which decreases it

Those things which bring about difficulty in livelihood

Food is also important for a student. Knowing those things which increase livelihood and bring about blessing in life and health is also important for a student that he continue to fulfil his aims. The scholars have written monumental books in this regard. I am only narrating a few things here.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا يَرُدُّ الْقَدَرَ إِلَّا الدُّعَاءُ وَلَا يَزِيدُ فِي الْعُمْرِ إِلَّا الْبِرُّ فَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لِيُحْرَمَ الرِّزْقُ
بِالدَّنْبِ يُصِيبُهُ

“Al-Qadr (destiny) can only be changed through Du’ā, and life can only be increased through good deeds. Indeed, man is deprived of sustenance due to the sin that he commits.”

(Al-Mustadrak lil Hākim, vol. 2, pp. 162, Ḥadīṣ 1857)

It is proven from the aforementioned Ḥadīṣ that committing sins deprives one of livelihood especially sins such as lying, as lying causes poverty and dependency. There is a Ḥadīṣ narrated in this regard. Sleeping in the morning is also a means of being deprived of livelihood and sleeping excessively creates poverty and dependency. Furthermore, sleeping excessively causes ignorance.